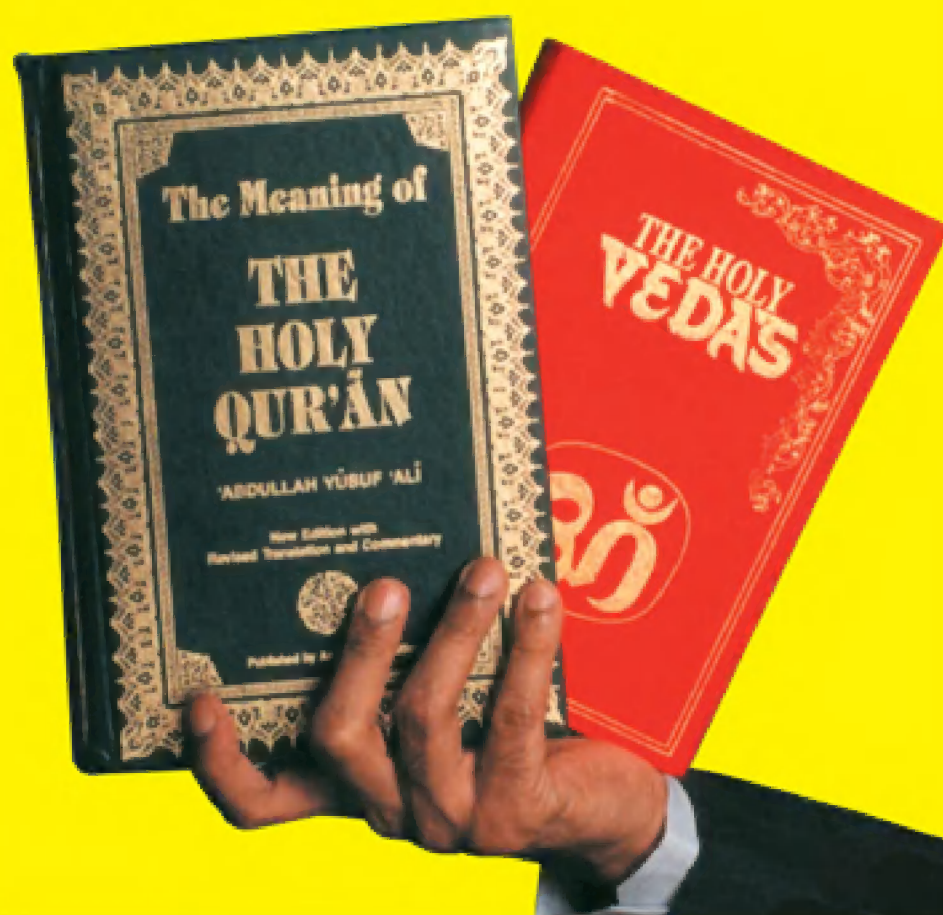


Similarities Between **Hinduis** and Isla**M**



by Dr Zakir Naik

SIMILARITIES BETWEEN HINDUISM & ISLAM

by
Dr Zakir Naik

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In the Name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful.

All Praises are due to Allah, and as such we praise Him.
And Peace and Blessings of Almighty Allah be upon His
Last and Final Messenger, Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), and
upon all His righteous servants until the Last Day.

In this book, we shall seek to find similarities or common
grounds between two major religions of the world –
Hinduism and Islam. The approach adopted in this work is
based on the following Verse of the Glorious Qur'an:

Surah Ale Imran Chapter 3 Verse 64:

*Say: "O People Of the Book!
Come to common terms
as between us and you:
that we worship none but Allah;
that we associate no partners with Him;
that we erect not, from among ourselves,
Lords and patrons other than Allah."
If then they turn back,
Say ye: "Bear witness that we (at least)
are Muslims (bowing to Allah's Will)."*

(AL QUR'AN 3:64)

CORRECT UNDERSTANDING OF A RELIGION

1

a. Don't observe followers of a Religion. Refer to Authentic Sources of that Religion

Followers of major religions, whether it is Hinduism, Islam or Christianity, have divided themselves and their beliefs into various sects.

It is not appropriate for one to try to understand a religion by observing the followers of that religion. Most followers may themselves not be aware of the correct teachings of their religion. Thus, the best and the most appropriate method of understanding any religion is to understand the authentic sources of that religion, i.e. the sacred scriptures of that religion.

b. Authentic Sources of Islam

Allah (swt), Almighty God, says in the Glorious Qur'an:

*And hold fast, all together,
by the Rope which Allah (stretches out for you),
and be not divided among yourselves.* (Al Qur'an 3:103)

The "rope of Allah" refers to is the Glorious Qur'an. Allah (swt) says that Muslims should not be divided and that the only unifying factor is the authentic source of the religion of Islam i.e. the Glorious Qur'an.

Allah (swt) also says in the Glorious Qur'an in several places including Surah An Nisa Chapter 4 Verse 59:

*O ye who believe!
Obey Allah, and obey the Messenger.* (Al Qur'an 4:59)

To understand the Qur'an better we have to refer to the explanation of the Qur'an by Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) on whom the Qur'an was revealed. Thus the best and the most appropriate method of understanding Islam is to understand the authentic sources of Islam which are the Glorious Qur'an, (the words of Almighty Allah) and the authentic Ahadith i.e. the sayings and traditions of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh).

c. Authentic Sources of Hinduism

Similarly, the best and the most appropriate method of understanding Hinduism is to understand its authentic sources, i.e. the sacred scriptures of Hinduism. The most sacred and authentic Scriptures of Hinduism are the Vedas, followed by the Upanishads, the Itihaasas, Bhagavad Gita, Puranas, etc.

Let us understand these two major religions of the world, i.e. Islam and Hinduism, by studying and analyzing the authentic Scriptures of these two major religions of the world.

d. Emphasis on those Similarities which are not commonly known

In this work on 'Similarities between Hinduism and Islam', we shall not lay emphasis on those similarities which are known by almost all the followers of both the religions. For example, a person should always speak the truth, he should not lie, he should not steal, he should be kind, he should not be cruel, etc. Instead, we shall consider those similarities, which are not commonly known by all the followers and hence are known only to those who are familiar with the contents of their sacred Scriptures.

1. Definition of 'Islam'

Islam is an Arabic word, which comes from the word 'Salm' which means 'peace' and from 'Silm', which means 'submitting your will to Allah' – the Almighty God. In short, Islam means 'peace acquired by submitting your will to Allah (swt)'.

The word 'Islam' is mentioned in several places in the Qur'an and the Hadith including Surah Ale Imran *Chapter 3 Verse 19 and Verse 85*.

2. Definition of a 'Muslim'

A 'Muslim' is a person who submits his will to Allah – the Almighty God. The word 'Muslim' is mentioned several times in the Qur'an and Hadith including Surah Ale Imran *Chapter 3 Verse 64* and Surah Fussilat *Chapter 41 Verse 33*.

3. A misconception about Islam

Many people have a misconception that Islam is a new religion that was formulated 1400 years ago, and that Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) was the founder of Islam. However, let me clarify that Islam is not the name of some unique religion presented for the first time by Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) who should, on that account be called the founder of Islam.

The Qur'an states that Islam – the complete submission of man before his one and only Unique Creator – is the one and only faith and way of life consistently revealed by God to humankind from the very beginning. Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Solomon, David, Moses, and Jesus (peace be upon them) – God's prophets who appeared at different times and places – all propagated the same faith and conveyed the same message of Tawheed (Oneness of God), Risaalah (Prophethood) and Aakhirah (Hereafter). These prophets of God were not founders of different religions to be named after them. They were each reiterating the message and faith of their predecessors.

However, Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) was the last Prophet of God. God revived through him the same genuine faith which had been conveyed by all His Prophets. This original message was earlier corrupted and split into various religions by people of different ages, who indulged in interpolations and admixtures. These interpolations and alien elements were eliminated by God, and Islam – in its pure and original form – was transmitted to humankind through Prophet Muhammad (pbuh).

Since there was to be no messenger or prophet after Muhammad (pbuh), the book revealed to him (i.e. the Glorious Qur'an) was preserved word for word so that it should be a source of guidance for all times.

Thus the religion of all the prophets was 'total submission to God's will' and one word for that in the Arabic language is 'Islam'. Abraham and Jesus (peace be upon them) too were Muslims, as Allah testifies in Surah Ale Imran *Chapter 3 Verse 67 and Verse 52* respectively.

1. Definition of a Hindu

a) The word 'Hindu' has a geographical significance. It was originally used to refer to those people who lived beyond the river Sindhu or the region watered by the river Indus.

b) Historians say that it was first used by the Persians who came to India through the North - Western passes of the Himalayas. The word 'Hindu' was also used by the Arabs.

c) This word 'Hindu' is nowhere mentioned in Indian literature or Hindu Scriptures before the advent of Muslims to India, according to the encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics 6:699

Exact quote from encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics: "The world Hindu is itself a foreign one. The Hindus never used it in any Sanskrit writing, that is, those which were written before the Mohammedan invasion."

d) Jawaharlal Nehru, in his book 'Discovery of India', writes on pages. 74, "The word 'Hindu' does not occur at all in our (Indian) ancient literature. The first reference to it in an Indian book is, I am told, in a Tantrik work of the eighth Century C E, where 'Hindu' means a people and not the followers of a particular religion.... The use of the word 'Hindu' in connection with a particular religion is of late occurrence."

In short, the word 'Hindu' is a geographical definition or term which is used to refer to people who live beyond the river Indus or in other words to those who live in India.

2. Definition of 'Hinduism'

a) 'Hinduism' has been derived from the word 'Hindu'. According to the New encyclopaedia britannica 20:581, Hinduism was a name given in English language in the Nineteenth Century by the English people to the multiplicity of the beliefs and faiths of the people of the Indus land. The British writers in 1830 gave the word Hinduism to be used as the common name for all the beliefs of the people of India excluding the Muslims and converted Christians.

b) According to Hindu Scholars, Hinduism is a misnomer and the religion 'Hinduism' should be either referred to as 'Sanatana Dharma', which means 'eternal religion', or as 'Vedic Dharma', meaning 'religion of the Vedas'. According to Swami Vivekananda, the followers of this religion are referred to as 'Vedantists'.

ARTICLES OF FAITH (EEMAAN) IN ISLAM AND COMPARISON WITH TENETS PRESCRIBED BY HINDU SCRIPTURES

4

Almighty Allah says in the Glorious Qur'an:

*It is not righteousness
that ye turn your faces towards East or West;
But it is righteousness
to believe in Allah and the Last Day,
and the Angels, and the Book,
and the Messengers.*
(Al Qur'an 2:177)

It is reported in Sahih Muslim:

“... A man came to the Prophet and said ‘Messenger of Allah, what is Eemaan (faith)?’ He (the prophet) said, ‘that you affirm your faith in Allah, His Angels, His Books, His Meeting, His Messengers, and that you believe in Resurrection and that you believe in Qadr (Divine decree)’.”
(Sahih Muslim Vol. 1 Book of Eemaan Chapter 2 Hadith 6)

Thus the six articles of faith of Islam are:

- i) Belief in God
(The first article of faith in Islam is ‘Tawheed’ i.e. belief in the one Unique Eternal Creator of all creation).
- ii) His Angels
- iii) His Books
- iv) His Messengers
- v) The Hereafter i.e. Life after death and
- vi) Qadr i.e. Destiny

Let's study what Hinduism says about these six articles.

THE CONCEPT OF GOD IN HINDUISM AND ISLAM

5

Let us examine the concept of God in these two major religions in the light of their respective scriptures and study if there are similarities.

First we shall discuss the Concept of God in Hinduism.

a. COMMON CONCEPT OF GOD IN HINDUISM

If you ask some persons who are Hindus that how many gods do they believe in, some may say three, some may say thirty-three, some may say a thousand, while some may say thirty-three crores i.e. 330 million. But if you ask this question to a learned Hindu who is well versed with the Hindu Scriptures, he will reply that the Hindus should actually believe and worship the One and Only God Who is the Creator and Sustainer of all.

b. DIFFERENCE BETWEEN ISLAM AND HINDUISM IS THAT OF ‘S *Everything is ‘God’s’ – Everything is ‘God’*

The major difference between the Hindus and the Muslims is that many Hindus believe in the philosophy of Pantheism, i.e. “everything is God – the Tree is God, the Sun is God, the Moon is God, the Snake is God, the Monkey is God and the Human Being is God.”

Muslims believe that “everything is God’s”. G-O-D with an apostrophe ‘s’. Everything belongs to the one and only unique eternal God. The tree belongs to God, the sun belongs to God, the moon belongs to God, the snake belongs to God, the monkey belongs to God and the human being belongs to God.

Thus the major difference between the Hindus and the Muslims is the apostrophe ‘s’. The Hindu says “everything is GOD”. The Muslim says “everything is God’s” – G-O-D with an apostrophe ‘s’. If we can solve the difference of the apostrophe ‘s’, the Hindus and the Muslims will be united.

The Glorious Qur’an says:

“Come to common terms as between us and you.”

Which is the first term?

“that we worship none but Allah”

So let's come to common terms by analyzing the scriptures of the Hindus and of the Muslims.

UPANISHADS

Upanishads are one of the sacred Scriptures of the Hindus.

i. Chandogya Upanishad Chapter 6 Section 2 Verse 1

It is mentioned in the Chandogya Upanishad:

“Ekam Evadvitiam”

“He is one only; without a second.”

(Chandogya Upanishad 6:2:1)

(The Principal Upanishad by S. Radhakrishnan pages 447 - 448)

(Sacred Books of the East Volume 1, The Upanishads Part I Page 93)

ii. Shwetashvatara Upanishad Chapter 6 Verse 9

It is mentioned in the Shwetashvatara Upanishad:

“Na chasya kascij janita na chadipah”

“Of Him there are neither parents nor Lord.”

(Shwetashvatara Upanishad 6:9)

(The Principal Upanishad by S. Radhakrishnan Page 745)

(Sacred Books of the East Volume 15, the Upanishads Part II Page 263)

iii. Shwetashvatara Upanishad Chapter 4 Verse 19

It is mentioned in Shwetashvatara Upanishad:

“Na tasya pratima asti”

“There is no likeness of Him”.

(Shwetashvatara Upanishad 4:19)

(The Principal Upanishad by S. Radhakrishnan Pages 736 - 737)

(Sacred Books of the East Volume 15, The Upanishads Part II Page 253)

iv. Shwetashvatara Upanishad Chapter 4 Verse 20

It is mentioned in Shwetashvatara Upanishad:

“na samdrse tisthati rupam asya, na chaksusa pasyati kas canainam”.

“His form cannot be seen, no one sees Him with the eye”.

(Shwetashvatara Upanishad 4:20)

(The Principal Upanishad by S. Radhakrishnan Page 737)

(Sacred Books of The East Volume 15, The Upanishads Part II Page 253)

BHAGAVAD GITA

The most popular amongst all the Hindu Scriptures is the Bhagavad Gita. The Bhagavad Gita mentions:

“Those whose intelligence has been stolen by material desires surrender into demigods” – that is “Those who are materialistic, they worship demigods” – i.e. others as deities besides the True God.
(Bhagavad Gita 7:20)

It is mentioned in the Bhagavad Gita:

“He who knows Me as the unborn, as the beginningless, as the Supreme Lord of all the worlds...”
(Bhagavad Gita 10:3)

YAJURVEDA

Vedas are the most sacred amongst all the Hindu Scriptures. There are principally four Vedas - Rigveda, Yajurveda, Samaveda, and Atharvaveda.

i. Yajurveda Chapter 32 Verse 3

It is mentioned in Yajurveda:

“na tasya pratima asti”
“There is no image of Him”

It further says,

“As He is unborn, He deserves our worship”.
(Yajurveda 32:3)

(The Yajurveda by Devi Chand Page 377)

ii. Yajurveda Chapter 40 Verse 8

It is mentioned in Yajurveda:

“He is imageless and pure”.
(Yajurveda 40:8)
(Yajurveda Samhita by Ralph T. H. Griffith Page 538)

iii. Yajurveda Chapter 40 Verse 9

It is mentioned in Yajurveda:

“Andhatma pravishanti ye asambhuti mupaste”
“They enter darkness, those who worship natural things.”
(Yajurveda 40:9)

(Yajurveda Samhita by Ralph T. H. Griffith Page 538)

For example worship of natural elements like air, water, fire, etc.

It further continues and says:

“They sink deeper in darkness those who worship ‘sambhuti’ i.e. created things

For example created things such as table, chair, idols, etc.

ATHARVAVEDA

i. Atharvaveda Book 20 Hymn Chapter 58 Verse 3

It is mentioned in Atharvaveda:

“Dev Maha Asi”

“God is Verily Great.”

(Atharvaveda 20:58:3)

(Atharvaveda Samhita Vol. 2 William Dwight Whitney Page 910)

RIGVEDA

The oldest and most sacred amongst all the Vedas is the Rigveda.

i. Rigveda Book 1 Hymn 164 Verse 46

It is mentioned in Rigveda:

“Ekam sad vipra bahudha vadanty.”

“Sages (learned Priests) call one God by many names.”

(Rigveda 1:164:46)

Truth is one, God is one, sages call it by various names.

A similar message is given in Rigveda Book 10 Hymn 114 Verse 5.

ii. Rigveda Book 2 Hymn 1

Rigveda gives no less than 33 different attributes to Almighty God. Several of these attributes are mentioned in Rigveda Book 2 Hymn 1

a. Brahma – Creator – Khaliq: Rigveda Book 2 Hymn 1 Verse 3

Amongst the various attributes given in Rigveda, one of the beautiful attributes for Almighty God is ‘Brahma’. ‘Brahma’ means ‘the Creator’. If you translate into Arabic it means ‘Khaliq’. Islam does not object to anyone calling Almighty God as ‘Khaliq’ or ‘Creator’ or ‘Brahma’, but if someone says that ‘Brahma’ i.e. Almighty God has got four heads and on each head is a crown and this Brahma has got four hands, Islam takes strong exception to it because such descriptions give an image to Almighty God. Such

descriptions are also against what is taught and propounded in Yajurveda Chapter 32, Verse 3 which says:

“Na tasya pratima asti”

“There is no image of Him”.

b. Vishnu – Sustainer – Rabb : Rigveda Book 2 Hymn 1 Verse 3

Another beautiful attribute mentioned in the Rigveda Book 2 Hymn 1 Verse 3 is ‘Vishnu’. ‘Vishnu’ means ‘the Sustainer’. If you translate this word into Arabic it means ‘Rabb’. Islam has no objection if anyone calls Almighty God as ‘Rabb’ or ‘Sustainer’ or ‘Vishnu’, but if someone says that Vishnu is Almighty God and this Vishnu has four arms, one of the right arms holds the ‘chakra’ i.e. a discus and one of the left arms holds a ‘conch shell’ and he rides on a bird or reclines on a snake couch, then Islam takes strong exception to this, because such descriptions of Vishnu give an image to Almighty God. Such descriptions are also against what is taught in Shwetashvatara Upanishad Chapter 4 Verse 19.

“Na tasya pratima asti”

“There is no image of Him”.

iii. Rigveda Book 8 Hymn 1 Verse 1

It is mentioned in Rigveda:

“Ma Chidanyadvi Shansata”

“Do not worship anybody but Him, the Divine One, Praise Him alone”

(Rigveda 8:1:1)

(Rigveda Samhita Vol. 9 Pages 1-2 by Swami Satya Prakash Sarasvati & Satyakam Vidyalkar)

iv. Rigveda Book 5 Hymn 81 Verse 1

It is mentioned in Rigveda:

“Verily great is the glory of the Divine Creator”

(Rigveda 5:81:1)

(Rigveda Samhita Vol. 6 Pages 1802 - 1803 by Swami Satya Prakash Sarasvati & Satyakam Vidyalkar)

v. Rigveda Book 6, Hymn 45, Verse 16

It is mentioned in Rigveda:

“Ya Eka Ittamushtuhi”

“Praise Him who is the matchless and alone”.

(Rigveda 6:45:16)
(Hymns of Rigveda by Ralph T. H. Griffith Page 648)
(Rigveda Samhita Vol. 7 Pages 2108 - 2109 by Swami Satya Prakash
Sarasvati & Satyakam Vidyalankar)

BRAHMA SUTRA OF HINDU VEDANTA

The Brahma Sutra of Hindu Vedanta is:

‘Ekam Brahm, dvitiya naste neh na naste kinchan”

“Bhagwan ek hi hai doosra nahin hai, nahin hai, nahin hai, zara bhi nahin hai.”

“There is only one God, not a second, not at all, not at all, not in the least bit.”

All the above quoted verses and passages from Hindu Scriptures clearly amplify the Oneness and Uniqueness of Almighty God, the Creator of all. Furthermore, they negate the existence of any other deity besides the One True God. These verses essentially teach and propound monotheism.

Therefore only if one carefully studies the Hindu Scriptures, will one understand and realize the correct concept of God in Hinduism.

CONCEPT OF GOD IN ISLAM

We will find similarities in the concept of God in Hinduism and in Islam since the Qur'an too propounds monotheism (as do Hindu scriptures as we examined above).

a. Surah Al Ikhlaas - The Touch Stone of Theology

As per Islam, the best and the most concise definition of God is given in Surah Al Ikhlaas of the Glorious Qur'an:

*Say: He is Allah,
the One and Only;
Allah, the Eternal, Absolute;
He begets not,
nor is He begotten;
and there is none like Him.
(Al Qur'an 112:1-4)*

The word 'As Samad' is difficult to translate. It means that absolute existence can be attributed only to Allah, all other existence being temporal or conditional. It also means Allah is not dependant on any person or thing but all persons and things are dependent on Him.

This Surah Al Ikhlāas i.e. Chapter 112 of the Glorious Qur'an is the touchstone of theology. '*Theo*' in Greek means 'God' and '*logy*' means 'study'. Thus '*Theology*' means 'study of God' and Surah Al Ikhlāas is the touchstone of the study of God.

If you want to purchase or sell your gold jewellery, you would first evaluate it. Such an evaluation of gold jewellery is done by a goldsmith with the help of a touchstone. He rubs the gold jewellery on the touchstone and compares its colour with rubbing samples of gold. If it matches with 24 Karat gold he will tell that your jewellery is 24 Karat pure gold. If it is not high quality pure gold, he will tell you its value whether 22 Karat, 18 Karat or it may not be gold at all. It may be fake because all that glitters is not gold.

Similarly Surah Al Ikhlāas (Chapter 112 of the Qur'an) is the touchstone of theology, which can verify whether the deity that you worship is the One True God or a false God. Surah Al Ikhlāas is a four-line definition of Almighty God according to the Qur'an. If anyone claims to be or is believed to be Almighty God satisfies this four-line definition, we Muslims will readily accept that deity as God. This Chapter of the Glorious Qur'an, Surah Al Ikhlāas, is the acid test. It is the 'Furqan' or the criterion to judge between the One True God and false claimants to Divinity. Hence, whichever deity any human worships, if such a deity fulfills the criteria specified in this Chapter of the Qur'an, then this deity is worthy of worship and is the One True God.

b. Is Bhagwan Rajneesh God?

Some people say that Bhagwan Rajneesh or Osho Rajneesh is Almighty God. Please note my words: I have stated that some people say that Bhagwan Rajneesh is Almighty God. Once, during a question and answer session, a Hindu gentleman misunderstood my statement. He said that Hindus do not worship Rajneesh as God. I am aware that Hinduism does not consider Rajneesh to be God. Rajneesh has followers, who are converts to his philosophy/ideology, but who were originally followers of various different religions.

Let us put this candidate Bhagwan Rajneesh to the test of Divinity as prescribed by Surah Al Ikhlāas, the touchstone of Divinity.

(i) The first criterion is 'Qul hu Allah hu ahad' – 'Say, He is Allah one and only'. Is Rajneesh one and only? We know several fake god-men and claimants of divinity amongst humans. Several are found in our country, India.

Rajneesh is surely not one and only. Not as a human and not even as a human claimant to godhood. However, some disciples of Rajneesh may still state that Rajneesh is unique and that he is one and only.

(ii) Let us analyse the second criterion – ‘Allahus samad’ – ‘Allah the Absolute and Eternal’. Is Rajneesh absolute and eternal? We know from his biography that he suffered from diabetes mellitus, asthma and chronic backache. He alleged that the US government gave him slow poisoning while he was in their jail. Imagine ‘Almighty God’ being poisoned! Moreover, all are aware that Rajneesh died and was cremated. So Rajneesh was neither eternal, nor absolute.

(iii) The third criterion is ‘Lam ya lid wa lam yu lad’ – ‘He begets not, nor is He begotten’. However, Rajneesh was begotten. He was born in Jabalpur in India. Like all humans, he too had a mother and a father. They later on became his disciples.

Rajneesh was a very intelligent person. In May 1981, he went to USA. He established a town in Oregon and named it ‘Rajneeshpuram’. It seems that he took America for a ride since the US government arrested him and later deported him out of America in 1985. So Rajneesh returned to India and started a ‘Rajneesh Neosanyas Commune’ in Pune in India which was later renamed the ‘Osho Commune’.

If you visit this ‘Osho Commune’ in Pune you will find it written on his tombstone, “Osho - never born, never died, only visited the planet earth between 11th Dec. 1931 to 19th Jan. 1990”. They conveniently forgot to mention on this tombstone that Rajneesh was not given a visa for 21 different countries of the world. Imagine ‘Almighty God’ visiting the earth and requiring a visa! The Archbishop of Greece had said that if Rajneesh was not deported they would burn his house and those of his disciples.

(iv) The fourth test is so stringent that none besides the One True God can pass it. ‘Wa lam ya kullahu kufuwan ahad’ which means, ‘there is none like Him’. The moment you can imagine or compare the candidate or claimant to godhood to anything, this candidate is not god. Neither can you have a mental picture of God.

We know that Rajneesh was a human being. He had one head, two hands, two feet and a white flowing beard. The moment you can think or imagine what the claimant to godhood is, he or she is not god.

Suppose someone says, “God is a thousand times as strong as Arnold Schwarzenegger.” Arnold Schwarzenegger is one of the strongest men on earth. He was given the title ‘Mr Universe’ five times. The moment you can compare Almighty God to anything, whether it is a thousand times stronger or a million times stronger, whether it be Dara Singh or King Kong, the moment you can compare the claimant to godhood to anything, he is not God. ‘Wa lam ya kul lahu kufuwan ahad’ ‘there is none like Him’.

ATTRIBUTES OF GOD

(i) The Qur’an mentions in Surah Al Israa’ Chapter 17 Verse 110:

Say: “Call upon Allah, or call upon Rahman.

By whatever name ye call upon Him, (it is well):

For to Him belong the Most Beautiful Names.

(Al Qur’an 17:110)

To Allah belong the most beautiful names. You can call Allah by any name but that name should be beautiful and should not conjure up a mental picture. The Qur’an gives no less than 99 different attributes to Almighty God. Some of these are: Ar Rahman, Ar Raheem, Al Hakeem; Most Gracious, Most Merciful and Most Wise. Allah has 99 different names / attributes and the crowning one, the hundredth one is ‘Allah’. The Qur’an repeats this message that to Allah belong the most beautiful names in:

(i) Surah Al A’raaf Chapter 7 Verse 180

(ii) In Surah Taahaa Chapter 20 Verse 8

(iii) In Surah Al Hashr Chapter 59 Verses 23-24

NAME ‘ALLAH’ PREFERRED TO THE WORD ‘GOD’

Muslims prefer calling Allah (swt) with His Name ‘Allah’, instead of the English word ‘God’. The Arabic word ‘Allah’ is pure and unique, unlike the English word ‘God’ which can be played around with.

If you add ‘s’ to God, it becomes ‘Gods’ that is plural of God. Allah is one and singular, there is no plural of Allah. If you add ‘dess’ to God, it becomes ‘Goddess’ that is a female god. There is nothing like male Allah or female Allah. Allah has no gender. If you add ‘father’ to God, it becomes ‘Godfather’. ‘He is my Godfather’ means that he is my guardian. There is nothing like ‘Allah Abba’ or ‘Allah father’ in Islam. If you add ‘mother’ to God it becomes ‘Godmother’, there is nothing like ‘Allah Ammi’ or ‘Allah Mother’ in Islam. If you put ‘tin’ before God, it becomes ‘tin-God’ i.e. a fake God, there is nothing like ‘tin Allah’ or fake Allah in Islam. ‘Allah’ is a unique word, which does not

conjure up any mental picture nor can it be played around with. Hence, Muslims prefer the name Allah when referring to the Almighty Creator. But sometimes while speaking to non-Muslims we may use the inappropriate word 'God' for Allah.

Allah is mentioned by name in Hindu Scriptures. There is an Upanishad by the name ALO Upanishad. The word "Allah", which refers to Almighty God in Arabic, is mentioned in:

Rigveda Book 2 Hymn 1 Verse 11

Rigveda Book 3 Hymn 30 Verse 10

Rigveda Book 9 Hymn 67 Verse 30

THE CONCEPT OF GOD IN HINDU SCRIPTURES

We had earlier stated that as per Islam the best and the most concise definition of God is given in Surah Al Ikhlāas of the Glorious Qur'an:

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and there is none like Him.
(Al Qur'an 112:1-4)*

Similar Verses in Hindu Scriptures

There are several passages in the Hindu Scriptures, which have the same or similar meaning as Surah Al Ikhlāas.

1. *Say: He is Allah, the One and Only.*
(Al Qur'an 112:1)

It has a meaning which is very similar to:

"Ekam Evadvitiam"

"He is one only; without a second."
(Chandogya Upanishad 6:2:1)

2. *Allah, the Eternal, Absolute.*
He begets not,
Nor is He begotten;
(Al Qur'an 112:2-3)

It has similar meaning as:

“He who knows Me as the unborn, as the beginningless, as the Supreme Lord of all the worlds...” (Bhagavad Gita 10:3)

and

“Of Him there are neither parents nor Lord.”
(Shwetashvatara Upanishad 6:9)

3. *And there is none like Him.*

(Al Qur'an 112:4)

A similar message is given in Shwetashvatara Upanishad & Yajurveda:

“Na Tasya pratima asti”

“There is no likeness of Him.”

(Shwetashvatara Upanishad 4:19 & Yajurveda 32:3)

Remember, the Brahma Sutra of Hindu Vedanta is:

“Ekam Brahm, dvitiya naste neh na naste naste kinchan”

“Bhagwan ek hi hai doosara nahin hai, nahin hai, nahin hai, zara bhi nahin hai.”

“There is only one God, not a second, not at all, not at all, not in the least bit.”

THE CONCEPT OF ANGELS IN HINDUISM AND ISLAM

6

We shall now examine the belief in angels of God in these two major religions and study if there are similarities.

1. Angels in Islam

Angels are a creation of Allah (swt). They have been created from light and are normally unseen. They do not have a freewill of their own and hence they always obey the commandments of Almighty Allah. Due to the absence of freewill they cannot disobey God. Different angels have been appointed by Almighty Allah for different activities. For example, Archangel Gabriel (Jibreel) was appointed to convey the revelation of Allah (swt) to the prophets of Allah.

Since angels are a creation of God, and not God, Muslims do not worship the angels.

2. Angels in Hinduism

There is no concept of angels in Hinduism. However Hindus believe that there are certain superbeings, which perform acts which cannot be done by normal human beings. These superbeings too are worshipped as deities by some Hindus.

THE CONCEPT OF REVELATION IN HINDUISM AND ISLAM

7

Let us now study what the Hindu and Islamic scriptures state regarding God's revelations or books revealed by God for the guidance of humans.

(i) Concept of Revelation in Islam

1. Allah (swt) has sent a revelation in every age.

Allah (swt) says in the Qur'an:

"For each period is a Book (revealed)

(Al Qur'an 13:38)

2. Four Revelations mentioned by name in the Qur'an:

There are several revelations sent by Allah (swt) in different ages for the guidance of human beings of the respective ages. Only four revelations are mentioned by name in the Qur'an – these are the Torah, the Zaboor, the Injeel and the Qur'an.

Torah is the Wahi, the revelation which was revealed to Prophet Moses (pbuh).

Zaboor is the Wahi, the revelation which was revealed to Prophet David (pbuh).

Injeel is the Wahi, the revelation which was revealed to Prophet Jesus (pbuh) and

The Qur'an is the last and final Wahi, the final revelation, which was revealed to the Last and Final Messenger Prophet Muhammad (pbuh).

3. All previous revelations were only meant for a particular group of people and for a particular time period.

Each of the revelations, prior to the revelation of the Glorious Qur'an, was meant only for a particular period and for a particular group of people.

4. The Qur'an was revealed for whole of Humankind

Since the Qur'an was the last and final revelation of Almighty Allah, it was revealed not only for the Muslims or the Arabs but it was revealed for the whole of Humankind. Further, the Qur'an was not revealed only for the era of the Prophet (pbuh) but it was revealed for all of humankind until the Last Day.

Allah (swt) says in the Qur'an:

*a. Alif Lam Ra. A Book which We have revealed unto thee,
in order that thou mightest lead humankind
out of the depths of darkness into light
- by the leave of their Lord —
to the way of (Him) the Exalted in Power,
Worthy of all Praise!
(Al Qur'an 14:1)*

*b. Here is a Message for mankind:
Let them take warning therefrom,
and let them know that He is (no other than) One God:
Let men of understanding take heed.
(Al Qur'an 14:52)*

*c. Ramadan is the (month)
in which was sent down the Qur'an,
as a guide to mankind,
also clear (Signs) for guidance and judgement
(between right and wrong).
(Al Qur'an 2:185)*

*d. Verily We have revealed the Book to thee in truth,
for (instructing) mankind.
(Al Qur'an 39:41)*

Al Qur'an is God's Word. It is the most sacred scripture of Islam. It is the Last and Final Revelation of Almighty God which was revealed in the sixth century of the English Calendar to the Last and Final Messenger Prophet Muhammad (pbuh).

5. The Qur'an is mentioned in the previous scriptures and in scriptures of other religions

It is mentioned in the Qur'an:

*Without doubt it is (announced)
in the revealed Books of former peoples.
(Al Qur'an 26:196)*

The mention of the Glorious Qur'an, this last and final Revelation of Almighty God, is made in all the previous scriptures and in the scriptures of various religions.

6. Hadith

The other sacred scripture of Islam besides the Qur'an is the Hadith i.e. the sayings and traditions of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). These Hadith are supplementary to the Glorious Qur'an. They do not and cannot overrule the teachings of the Qur'an nor will they contradict the Qur'an.

(ii) BOOKS OF HINDUISM

INTRODUCTION

There are two kinds of sacred writings in Hinduism: **Shruti and Smriti**.

'Shruti' means that which has been heard, perceived, understood or revealed. It is the oldest and the most sacred of the Hindu Scriptures. The 'Shruti' is divided into two main parts – the Vedas and the Upanishads and these two are considered to be of divine origin.

'Smriti' is not as sacred as the 'shruti.' Yet it is considered to be important and is popular with the Hindus today. 'Smriti' means memory or remembered. This Hindu literature is easier to understand because it speaks about the truths of the Universe through Symbolism and Mythology. The 'smritis' are not considered to be of divine origin but are accepted as human composition. The 'Smriti' lists rules governing the actions of the individual, the community and the society, which regulate and guide individuals in their daily conduct. They are also known as 'Dharma Shashtra'. 'Smritis' consist of many writings including the Puranas and Itihaasas.

There are several Holy Scriptures of the Hindus. Amongst them are:

- (a) The Vedas and the Upanishads (the Shrutis), and
- (b) The Puranas and the Itihaasas (the Smritis).

1. VEDAS

i) The word 'Veda' is derived from the Sanskrit word 'vid', which means 'to know'. The word 'Veda' therefore, means 'knowledge par excellence' or 'sacred wisdom'. There are four principal divisions of the Vedas. (Although

according to their number, they amount to 1131 out of which about a dozen are available. According to Mahabhasya of Patanjali, there are 21 branches of Rigveda, 9 types of Atharvaveda, 101 branches of Yajurveda and 1000 of Samaveda)

ii) The Rigveda, the Yajurveda and the Samaveda are considered to be more ancient books and are known as 'Trai Viddya' or the 'Triple Sciences'. The Rigveda is the oldest and has been compiled in three long and different periods of time. The fourth Veda is the Atharvaveda, which is of a later date.

Rigveda is mainly composed of songs of praise.

Yajurveda deals with sacrificial formula.

Samaveda refers to melody.

Atharvaveda has a large number of magic formulas.

iii) There is no unanimous opinion regarding the date of compilation or revelation of the four Vedas. According to Swami Dayanand, the founder of the Arya Samaj, the Vedas were revealed 1310 millions of years ago. According to other scholars they are not more than 4000 years old.

iv) Similarly there is a difference of opinion regarding the places where these books were revealed and the Rishis to whom these Scriptures were given. In spite of these differences, the Vedas are considered the most authentic of the Hindu Scriptures and the real foundations of the Hindu Dharma.

2. UPANISHADS

i) The word 'Upanishad' is derived from 'Upa' meaning 'near', 'ni' which means 'down' and 'shad' means 'to sit'. Therefore 'Upanishads' means 'sitting down near'. Groups of pupils sit near the teacher to learn from him the sacred doctrines.

According to Samkara, Upanishad is derived from the root word 'sad' which means 'to loosen', 'to reach' or 'to destroy', with 'upa' and 'ni' as prefix. Therefore Upanishad means 'Brahma knowledge' by which ignorance is loosened or destroyed.

The number of Upanishads exceeds 200 (according to different sources) though the Indian tradition puts it at 108. There are 10 principal Upanishads however some consider them to be more than 10, while others state that there are 18.

ii) The Vedanta meant originally the Upanishads, though the word is now used for the system of philosophy based on the Upanishad. Literally, Vedanta means the end of the Veda, Vedasya-antah, the conclusion as well as the goal of Vedas. The Upanishads are the concluding portions of the Vedas and chronologically they come at the end of the Vedic period.

iii) Some Pundits consider the Upanishads to be superior to the Vedas.

3. ITIHAAS – EPIC

There are two Itihaasas or epics namely the Ramayana and the Mahabharata.

i) Ramayana

Ramayana is an epic which deals with the life story of Rama. Most Hindus are aware of the story of the Ramayana.

ii) Mahabharata

Mahabharata is another great epic, which speaks about the feud between the cousins – the Pandavas and the Kauravas. It also contains the life story of Krishna. The story of this epic, the Mahabharata, is also commonly known to most Hindus.

4. BHAGAVAD GITA

Bhagavad Gita is the most popular and well-known amongst all the Hindu scriptures. It is a part of the epic Mahabharata, and contains 18 Chapters from Bhishma Parva Chapters 25 to 42. It contains the advice given by Krishna, in the battlefield, to Arjuna.

5. PURANAS

Next in order of authenticity are the Puranas, which are the most widely read scripture. The word 'Puranas' means 'ancient' The Puranas contain the history of the Creation of the Universe, history of the early Aryan tribes and life stories of the divines and deities of the Hindus. The Puranas are believed by Hindus to be revealed books like the Vedas, which are believed to have been revealed simultaneously with the Vedas or at sometime close to the revelation of the Vedas

Maharishi Vyas has divided the Puranas into 18 voluminous parts. He also arranged the Vedas under various heads. The Gita and the Mahabharata were authored or compiled by him.

Chief among the Puranas is a book known as Bhavishya Purana. It is called so because it gives prophecies of future events (accounts are given of past events or past deeds). The Hindus consider the Bhavishya Purana to be the word of God. Maharishi Vyas is considered a mere compiler of the book the real author being God.

6. OTHER SCRIPTURES

There are several other Hindu Scriptures like Manusmriti, Satapatha Brahmana, Srimad Bhagvatam, Vishnu Sutra, etc.

THE MOST AUTHENTIC HINDU SCRIPTURES ARE THE VEDAS

Amongst all the Hindu Scriptures, the Vedas are considered the most authentic. No other Hindu Scriptures overrule the Vedas. If there is a contradiction between the Vedas and any other Hindu scripture, the opinion of the Vedas will prevail, according to Hindu Scholars.

THE CONCEPT OF PROPHETHOOD IN HINDUISM AND ISLAM

8

MESSENGERS IN ISLAM

Messengers or Prophets of Almighty God are persons chosen by Almighty God to communicate His message to the people.

Messengers were sent to every nation

- a. *To every people (was sent) a Messenger: when their Messenger comes (before them), the matter will be judged between them with justice, and they will not be wronged. (Al Qur'an 10:47)*
- b. *For We assuredly sent amongst every people a messenger (with the command), "Serve Allah, and eschew evil": Of the people were some whom Allah guided, and some on whom error became inevitably (established). So travel through the earth, and see what was the end of those who denied (the Truth). (Al Qur'an 16:36)*
- c. *And there never was a people, without a warner having lived among them (in the past). (Al Qur'an 35:24)*
- d. *And to every people a guide. (Al Qur'an 13:7)*

25 PROPHETS ARE MENTIONED BY NAME IN THE QUR'AN

There are 25 Prophets mentioned by name in the Glorious Qur'an - Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus and Muhammad (peace be upon them).

STORIES OF ONLY SOME PROPHETS MENTIONED IN THE QUR'AN

It is mentioned in the Qur'an:

- a. *Of some messengers We have already told you the story;
of others we have not, and to Moses Allah spoke direct.
(Al Qur'an 4:164)*
- b. *We did aforetime send Messengers before you:
of them there are some whose story We have related to you,
and some whose story We have not related to you.
(Al Qur'an 40:78)*

124,000 PROPHETS SENT BY ALLAH

According to a Sahih Hadith in Mishkatul Masaabih Vol. 3 Hadith 5737 and Musnad Ahmad Vol. 5 Pages 265-266:

“There were 124,000 prophets sent by Allah (swt).”

PREVIOUS PROPHETS WERE SENT ONLY FOR THEIR PEOPLE

All the prophets that came before Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) were sent for their people and nation, and the complete message they preached was meant only for that time.

PROPHET MUHAMMAD (PBUH) IS THE LAST AND FINAL MESSENGER

*It is mentioned in Surah Al Ahzaab:
Muhammad is not the father of any of your men,
but (he is) the Messenger of Allah,
and the Seal of the Prophets:
And Allah has full knowledge of all things.
(Al Qur'an 33:40)*

PROPHET MUHAMMAD (PBUH) SENT FOR WHOLE OF HUMANKIND

Since Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) was the last and final messenger of Allah (swt), he was sent not only for the Muslims or the Arabs but he was sent for the whole of humankind. It is mentioned in the Qur'an:

- a. *We sent you not, but as a mercy for all creatures.
(Al Qur'an 21:107)*
- b. *We have not sent you
but as a universal (Messenger) to men,*

*giving them glad tidings,
and warning them (against sin),
but most men understand not.
(Al Qur'an 34:28)*

c. It is mentioned in Sahih Al Bukhari:

*"Allah's Messenger (pbuh) said every prophet used to be sent
to his nation only but I have been sent to whole of humankind."
(Sahih Al Bukhari Vol. 1 Book of Salaah 56 Hadith 429)*

AVATAARS AND MESSENGERS IN HINDUISM

1. Avataar according to common Hindus Common Hindus have the following concept of Avataar. Avataar is the Sanskrit term where 'Av' means 'down' and 'tr' means 'passover'. Thus 'Avataar' means 'to descend down' or 'to come down'. The meaning of 'Avataar' in the Oxford Dictionary is, "(In Hindu Mythology) the descent of a deity or released soul to earth in bodily form". In simple words, Avataar according to common Hindus means Almighty God coming down to earth in bodily form.

A common Hindu believes that Almighty God comes down to the earth in some bodily form to protect the religion, to set an example or to set the rules for human beings.

There is no reference of Avataars anywhere in the Vedas, the most sacred of the Hindu scriptures i.e. Sruti. However it is found in the Smrti i.e., the Puranas and the Itihaasas.

(i) It is mentioned in the most popular and widely read book of Hinduism, the Bhagavad Gita, Chapter 4 Verses 7-8:

*"Whenever there is a decay of righteousness, O Bharata,
and a rise of unrighteousness, then I manifest Myself.*

For the protection of the good, for the destruction of the wicked and for the establishment of righteousness, I am born in every age."

(Bhagavad Gita 4:7-8)

ii) It is mentioned in Bhagawata Purana:

*"Whenever there is deterioration in righteousness and waxing of sinfulness,
the glorious lord incarnates himself." (Bhagawata Purana 9:24:56)*

2. No concept of Avataars but of Messengers in Vedas and in Islam

Islam does not believe that Almighty God takes human forms. He chooses a man amongst men and communicates with him on a higher level to deliver His message to humankind – such individuals are called Messengers of God.

'Avataar', as mentioned earlier, is derived from 'Av' and 'tr', which means to descend down or to come down. Some scholars state that God's Avataar indicates a possessive case and actually means the coming of a man *'who is in special relationship with God'*. Mention of such chosen men of God appears in several places in all the four Vedas. Thus, if we have to reconcile Bhagavad Gita and Purana with the most authoritative scripture, the Vedas, we have to agree that Bhagavad Gita and the Puranas, when they speak about Avataars, they refer to chosen men of God. Islam calls such men 'Prophets'.

ANTHROPOMORPHISM

a. God need not take human form to understand human beings

Many non-Semitic religions have at sometime or the other propounded the belief in the philosophy of anthropomorphism i.e. the concept of God taking human form. Those who believe in it have a seemingly good logic for it. They state that Almighty God is so pure and holy that He is unaware of the hardships, shortcomings, weaknesses, difficulties, feelings, passions, emotions and temptations of human beings. He does not know how a person feels when he or she is hurt or is in trouble. Therefore, in order to set rules of behaviour and conduct for human beings, God came down to earth in the form of a human. On the face of it, this may to some seem logical. But we need to examine this.

b. Creator prepares an instruction manual

Suppose I manufacture a DVD Player, do I have to become a DVD Player to know what is good or bad for the DVD Player? The manufacturer does not have to himself play the role of a DVD Player to understand the stress caused by normal usage or even faulty usage of the DVD Player.

Hence, for the users, I, as the manufacturer will write an instruction manual. In this manual I state, "in order to Play a DVD, insert the DVD and press the 'play' button. In order to stop, press the 'stop' button. If you want to fast forward press the 'Fast Forward' button. Do not drop it from a height for it will get damaged. Do not immerse it in water for it will get spoilt". Manufacturers write an instruction manual or a user manual, which contains the do's and don'ts for usage of the machine.

c. The Glorious Qur'an is the instruction manual for human beings

In a similar fashion, our Lord and Creator, Allah (swt) does not need to come to earth in the form of a human being to know what is good or bad for the human beings. He, who has created this vast universe, has complete

knowledge of His Creation. He only has to reveal the instruction manual for the benefit of humans. Such a manual from the Creator informs and explains:

- (i) the purpose and objective of the existence of human beings,
- (ii) who created them and
- (iii) what they should do and what they should refrain and abstain from in order to get eternal success.

The last and final instruction manual for human beings from their Creator is the Glorious Qur'an.

d. Allah chooses Messengers

Allah (swt) does not need to come down personally for writing the instruction manual. He chooses a man amongst men to deliver His message and communicates with him at a higher level through His revelations. Such chosen men are called messengers and prophets of God. God conveys His revelations to such persons.

GOD WILL NOT AND DOES NOT TAKE HUMAN FORM

a. God cannot do everything

Some people may argue that God can do everything, then why can he not take human form? If God were to take human form, then He would no longer remain God because the qualities of God and the qualities of human beings are different.

(i) God is immortal – Human beings are mortal

God is immortal; human beings are mortal. You cannot have a 'god-man' i.e. an immortal and mortal being at the same time. It is meaningless.

God does not have a beginning. Human beings have a beginning. You cannot have a person, who does not have a beginning and yet at the same time having a beginning.

God has no end. Humans have an end. You can't have an entity that has no end and still have an end at the same time. It is meaningless.

(ii) God does not require to eat

Almighty God does not require to eat. Human beings need to eat. The Glorious Qur'an says in Surah Al An'aam:

*And He it is that feeds but is not fed.
(Al Qur'an 6:14)*

(iii) God does not require rest and sleep

God does not require rest. Human beings require rest. God does not require sleep. Human beings require sleep. The Glorious Qur'an says in Ayatul Kursi:

*Allah! There is no god but He –
the Living, the Self-subsisting, Eternal.
No slumber can seize Him nor sleep.
His are all things in the heavens and on earth.
(Al Qur'an 2:255)*

b. Worshipping another human being is useless

If God takes human form, he would cease to be god and it is useless to worship a human being. For example, suppose that I am a student of a very intelligent teacher and I regularly take his guidance and help in my studies. If unfortunately, my teacher meets with an accident and has amnesia i.e. an irreparable loss of memory, it will be foolish of me to yet seek guidance and help in my studies from him. Because this person no longer has the expertise after the transformation of his memory due to the accident. In a similar fashion, how can a human being worship and ask for divine help from a 'god' who has given up his divine qualities and has transformed himself into a human being like you and I? If a person can worship a human being then why not others worship you and also worship so many humans around us?

c. Human beings cannot become God

So God cannot be both; God and yet a human at the same time. For if God retains His divine powers then He is not a human because humans do not have divine powers. Moreover, if God were to become a mortal which is a human quality, then he is no longer God, for God is immortal.

Later on that same human being cannot become God, because it is not possible for human beings to become God. If it was so, you and I too would become God and attain divine powers.

That is the reason why God will never take or rather cannot take human form. The Qur'an speaks against all forms of anthropomorphism. Anthropomorphism is illogical.

d. God will not do ungodly things

Islam does not say that God can do anything. Islam says that God has power over all things. Let us understand this with the help of some examples of matters that God cannot do simply because He is divine.

(i) God will not tell a lie

God only does Godly things; He does not do ungodly things. God cannot tell a lie. God will never, and can never tell a lie because to tell a lie is an ungodly act. The moment God tells a lie, He will cease to be God.

(ii) God will not do any injustice

God cannot do injustice. He will not do it and He cannot do so because being unjust is an ungodly act. The Qur'an says:

"Allah is never unjust in the least degree." (Al Qur'an 4:40)

The moment God does injustice He ceases to be God. Please realize that God cannot be God and not-God at the same time!!! He cannot have divine qualities as a Creator, and yet have the mortal qualities and attributes of His Creation.

(iii) God will not make a mistake

Complete, absolute, everlasting and total perfection are qualities and attributes only of the Creator. His creation can never ever achieve these qualities. We can only try to continually improve and excel but we can never ever be perfect.

Hence, can God ever make a mistake? He will never make a mistake. He cannot make a mistake. To err is human. Making a mistake is an ungodly act. The Glorious Qur'an says:

"...my Lord never errs." (Al Qur'an 20:52)

The moment God makes a mistake, He ceases to be God.

(iv) God will not forget

God will not forget because forgetting is an ungodly act. The Qur'an says:

"...my Lord never errs, nor forgets." (Al Qur'an 20:52)

The moment God forgets, He ceases to be god.

e. GOD ONLY DOES GODLY THINGS

i. Allah has power over all things

The Glorious Qur'an says in several places:

"for Allah has power over all things"

This same statement of Divine wisdom is emphasized for our understanding in:

Surah Al Baqarah Chapter 2 Verse 106

Surah Al Baqarah Chapter 2 Verse 109

Surah Al Baqarah Chapter 2 Verse 284

Surah Ale Imran Chapter 3 Verse 29

Surah An Nahl Chapter 16 Verse 77

Surah Faatir Chapter 35 Verse 1

ii. Allah is the doer of all that He intends

The Glorious Qur'an says,

"Allah is the Doer of all that He intends."

(Al Qur'an 85:16)

God only intends Godly things – not unGodly things. By ascribing human-like qualities of forgetting, of making mistakes, of getting tired, of needing food, of getting jealous and the like – does one realize that one is mocking God and committing blasphemy by ascribing such attributes to God? Do you think we humans are in any way justified in attributing such human qualities to God?

Is it not a better choice, and a truthful one at that, to state that our Creator is free from all such blemishes that ignorant humans ascribe to Him?

For the Glorious Qur'an says:

"Glory to your Lord, the Lord of Honour and Power!

(He is) free from what they ascribe (to Him)!

(Al Qur'an 37:180)

MUHAMMAD (PBUH) PROPHESED IN HINDU SCRIPTURES

10

a. Muhammad (pbuh) prophesied in Bhavishya Purana

According to Bhavishya Purana in the Pratisarag Parv III, Khand 3, Adhyay 3, Shlokas 5-8:

“A Malechha (belonging to a foreign country and speaking a foreign language) spiritual teacher will appear with his companions, his name will be Mohammad. Raja (Bhoj) after giving this Mahadev Arab (of angelic disposition) a bath in the ‘panchgavya’ and the Ganges water (i.e. purging him of all sins) offered him the presents of his sincere devotion and showing him all reverence said, “I make obeisance to thee, ‘O ye! The pride of mankind, the dweller in Arabia, ye have collected a great force to kill the devil and you yourself have been protected from the malechha opponents.”

The Prophecy clearly states:

(i) The name of the Prophet as Muhammad.

(ii) He will belong to Arabia; the Sanskrit word ‘Marusthal’ means a ‘sandy track’ of land or a ‘desert’.

(iii) Special mention is made of the companions of the Prophet (pbuh) i.e. the Sahaabas. No other Prophet had as many companions as Prophet Muhammad (pbuh).

(iv) He is referred as the pride of mankind (Girijanath).

The Glorious Qur’an reconfirms:

“And thou (standest) on an exalted standard of character.” (Al Qur’an 68:4)

“Ye have indeed in the Messenger of Allah a beautiful pattern (of conduct).” (Al Qur’an 33:21)

(v) He will kill the devil i.e. abolish idol worship and all sorts of vices.

(vi) The prophet will be protected against his enemies.

Some people may argue that Raja Bhoj mentioned in the prophecy lived in the 11th century CE i.e. 500 years after the advent of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) and that he was the descendant of the 10th generation of Raja Shalivahan. These people fail to realize that there was not only one Raja of the name Bhoj. The Egyptian Monarchs were called as 'Pharaohs' and the Roman Kings were known as 'Caesars'. Similarly Indian Rajas were given the title of 'Bhoj'. There were several Raja Bhojs who came before the one in 11th Century CE

The Prophet (pbuh) did not physically take a bath in Panchgavya and the water of Ganges. Since the water of Ganges is considered holy, taking bath in the Ganges is an idiom meaning washing away or making immune from all sorts of sins. Here the prophecy implies that prophet Muhammad (pbuh) was sinless i.e. 'ma'soom'.

b. Muhammad (pbuh) prophesied in Bhavishya Purana

According to Bhavishya Purana in the Pratisarag Parv III, Khand 3, Adhyay 3 Shlokas 10 - 27, Maharishi Vyas has prophesied:

"The Malechhas have spoiled the well-known land of the Arabs. Arya Dharma is not to be found in the country. Before also there appeared a misguided fiend whom I had killed; he has now again appeared being sent by a powerful enemy. To show these enemies the right path and to give them guidance, the well-known Mohamad (Muhammad) who has been given by me, the epithet of Brahma, is busy in bringing the 'Pishachas' to the right path. O Raja, you need not go to the land of the foolish Pishachas, you will be purified through my kindness even where you are. At night, he of the angelic disposition, the shrewd man, in the guise of a pischacha said to Raja Bhoj, O Raja ! Your Arya Dharma has been made to prevail over all religions, but according to the commandments of Ishwar Parmatama, I shall enforce the strong creed of the meat eaters. My followers will be men circumcised, without a tail (on their heads), keeping beard, creating a revolution, announcing Adhaan (call for prayer) and will be eating all lawful things. He will eat all sorts of animals except swine. They will not seek purification from the holy shrubs, but will be purified through warfare. On account of their fighting the irreligious nations, they will be known as Musalmaans. I shall be

the originator of this religion of the meat-eating nation.”

The Prophecy states that:

(i) The evil-doers have corrupted the Arab land.

(ii) Arya Dharma is not found in that land.

(iii) The present enemies will be destroyed just as the previous enemies like Abraha had perished. The Qur'an speaks about these sorts of previous enemies in Surah Al Feel:

“Seest thou not how thy lord dealt with the companions of the elephant?

Did He not make their treacherous plan go astray?

And He sent against them flights of Birds, striking them with stones of baked clay.

Then did he make them like an empty field of stalks and straw, (of which the corn) has been eaten up.

(Al Qur'an 105:1-5)

(iv) Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) has been given the title Brahma in order to guide the opponents of truth to the Truth.

(v) The Indian Raja need not go to Arab land since his purification will take place in India after the Musalmaan will arise in India.

(vi) The coming Prophet will attest the truth of the Aryan faith i.e. Monotheism and will reform the misguided people.

(vii) The Prophet's followers will be circumcised. They will be without a tail on their heads, they will keep beards and they will create a great revolution.

(viii) They will announce the 'Adhaan' i.e. 'call for prayer'.

(ix) He will only eat lawful things and animals, but will not eat pork. The Qur'an confirms this in no less than four different places:

Surah Al Baqarah Chapter 2 Verse 173

Surah Al Ma'idah Chapter 5 Verse 3

Surah Al An'aam Chapter 6 Verse 145

Surah An Nahl Chapter 16 Verse 115

“Forbidden for you for food are dead meat, blood, flesh of swine and that on which had been invoked the name of other than Allah.

- (x) They will not purify with grass like the Hindus, but by means of sword they will fight the evil-doers and the opponents of Truth and Justice.
- (xi) They will be called Musalmaan.
- (xii) They will be a meat-eating nation.

The Qur'an permits humans to eat herbivorous animals in Surah Al Ma'idah Chapter 5 Verse 1 and in Surah Al Mu'minoon Chapter 23 Verse 21.

According to Bhavishya Purana Parv III, Khand 1, Adhyay 3, Shlokas 21-23:

“Corruption and persecution are in seven sacred cities of Kashi etc. India is inhabited by Rakshas, Shabar, Bhil and other foolish people. In the land of ‘Malechhas’ the followers of the ‘Malechhah dharma’ (Islam) are wise and brave people. All good qualities are found in Musalmaans and all sorts of vices have accumulated in the land of the Aryas. Islam will rule in India and its island. Having known these facts O Meeni, glorify the name of the Lord.”

The Qur'an confirms:

“It is He who hath sent His messenger with Guidance and the Religion of Truth, to proclaim it over all religion, even though the pagans may detest (it).”
(Al Qur'an 9:33 and 61:9)

and a similar Verse ends with:

“And enough is Allah for a Witness.” (Al Qur'an 48:28)

c. Prophet Muhammad prophesied in Atharvaveda

In the 20th Book of Atharvaveda Hymn 127, some Suktas (Chapters) are known as ‘kuntap sukta’. ‘Kuntap’ means ‘the consumer of misery and troubles’, thus meaning ‘the message of peace and safety’. This translated in Arabic means Islam.

‘Kuntap’ also means hidden glands in the abdomen. These mantras are probably called so because their true meaning was hidden and were to be revealed in future. Their hidden meaning is also connected with the navel or the middle point of the earth. Makkah is called the ‘Ummul Qura’, or ‘the

mother of the towns' or 'the navel of the earth' in many revealed books. It was the first house of worship of the One God where Almighty God gave spiritual nourishment to the world. Another name for Makkah is Bakkah. Thus 'kuntap' stands for Makkah or Bakkah. The Glorious Qur'an says:

*"The first House (of worship) appointed for men was that at Bakkah (Makkah); full of blessings and of guidance for all kinds of beings."
(Al Qur'an 3:96)*

Several people like M. Bloomfield, Prof. Ralph Griffith, Pandit Rajaram, Pandit Khem Karan and others have translated these kuntap suktas. The main points mentioned in the kuntap suktas in Atharvaveda Book 20 Hymn 127 Verses 1-14 are:

Mantra 1

He is narashansah or the praised one (Mohammad).

He is Kaurama, the prince of peace or the emigrant, who is safe even amongst a host of 60,090 enemies.

Mantra 2.

He is a camel-riding Rishi, whose chariot touches the heaven.

Mantra 3

He is Mamah Rishi.

Mantra 4

Vachyesv rebh O'! ye who glorifies.'

Mantra 14

We glorify or praise the great hero with a song of praise and a prayer. Please accept this praise so that evil may not befall us.

(i) The Sanskrit word 'Narashansah' means 'the praised one' which is the literal translation of the Arabic word Muhammad (pbuh).

The Sanskrit word 'Kaurama' means 'one who spreads and promotes peace'. The holy Prophet was the 'prince of peace' and he preached equality

of humankind and universal brotherhood. 'Kaurama' also means 'an emigrant'. The Prophet migrated from Makkah to Madeenah and was thus an emigrant.

(ii) He will be protected from 60,090 enemies, which was the approximate population of Makkah at the Prophet's (pbuh) time. The 'Rishi' would ride a camel. This clearly indicates that, it cannot be an Indian Rishi since it is forbidden for a Brahman to ride a camel. According to Manusmriti Chapter 11 Verse 202 and Sacred Books of the East, Volume 25, Laws of Manu Page 472:

"A Brahman is prohibited from riding a camel or an ass and to bathe naked. He should purify himself by suppressing his breath".

(iii) This mantra gave the Rishi name as 'Mamah'. No Rishi in India or any other prophet had this name. 'Mamah' is derived from 'Mah' which means 'to esteem highly', or 'to revere', and 'to exalt'. Some Sanskrit books give the prophet's name as 'Mahamad' but this word according to Sanskrit grammar can also be used in a bad sense. It is incorrect to apply grammar to an Arabic word. Actually 'Mamah' has the same meaning and somewhat similar pronunciation as the word Muhammad (pbuh).

d. Battle of the Allies described in the Vedas.

It is mentioned in Atharvaveda Book 20 Hymn 21, Verse 6:

"O Lord of the truthful! These our libations (drinks), these feats of bravery and the inspiring songs gladdened thee in the field of battle. When thou renderst vanquished without fight the ten thousand opponents of the praying one, the adoring one."

(i) This Prophecy of the Veda describes the well-known battle of Ahzaab or the battle of the Allies during the time of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). The Prophet (pbuh) was victorious without an actual conflict, which is mentioned in the Qur'an:

*"When the believers saw the Confederate forces they said:
'This is what Allah and His Messenger had promised us,
and Allah and His Messenger told us what was true'.
And it only added to their faith and their zeal in obedience.
(Al Qur'an 33:22)*

(ii) The Sanskrit word 'karo' in the Mantra means the 'Praising one' which when translated into Arabic means 'Ahmed', the second name of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh).

(iii) The 10,000 opponents mentioned in the mantra were the enemies of the prophet (pbuh) and the Muslims were only 3,000 in number.

(iv) The last words of the Mantra means the defeat was given to the enemies without an actual fight.

e. The enemies defeat in the conquest of Makkah.

It is mentioned in Atharvaveda Book 20 Hymn 21 Verse 7:

"You have O' Indra overthrown 20 kings and 60,099 men with an outstripping chariot-wheel who came to fight the praised one or far famed (Muhammad) Orphan."

(i) The population of Makkah at the time of Prophet's (pbuh) advent was nearly 60,000.

(ii) There were several clans in Makkah each having its own chief. Totally there were about 20 chiefs to rule the population of Makkah.

f. A similar prophecy is also found in Rigveda Book I Hymn 53 Verse 9

(i) The Sanskrit word used is 'Sushrama' which means 'praiseworthy' or 'well - praised' which in Arabic means 'Muhammad (pbuh)'.

(ii) An 'Abandhu' meaning a 'helpless man' who was far famed and 'Praised one' i.e. 'Muhammad (pbuh)' overcame his enemies with the help of God.

g. Muhammad (pbuh) did not drink his mother's milk

It is mentioned in :

(i) Samaveda Agni, Mantra 64

(ii) Samaveda Book 1 Chapter 2 Decade 2 Verse 2

"The habits of this child are very strange. He does not go to his mother for milk, his mother does not feed him milk and yet as soon as he is born he takes up the noble assignment of prophethood."

h. Muhammad (pbuh) prophesied by name as 'Ahmed'

Muhammad (pbuh) was an orphan and thus none of the wet nurses were interested in taking care of him. On the other hand, no mother was willing to give her child to Lady Halima because she did not seem to have enough milk. Thus Lady Halima took Muhammad (pbuh) home for breast-feeding, and as soon as she began to breast-feed Muhammad (pbuh), there was a surge of milk in her breasts.

He has been prophesied by name as 'Ahmed' in:

- (I) Yajurveda Chapter 31 Verse 18
- (ii) Rigveda Book 8 Hymn 6 Verse 10
- (iii) Atharvaveda Book 8 Chapter 5 Verse 16
- (iv) Atharvaveda Book 20 Chapter 126 Verse 14

Muhammad (pbuh) has been prophesied by name as 'Ahmed' also in Samaveda Uttararchika Mantra 1500, Samaveda Part II Book VII Chapter 1 Section 5 Verse 1 and Samaveda Indra Chapter 2 Mantra 152 and Samaveda Book 2 Chapter 2 Decade 1 Verse 8):

"Ahmed acquired from his Lord the knowledge of eternal law. I received light from him just as from the sun."

The Prophecy confirms:

- (i) The name of the Prophet as 'Ahmed'. Since 'Ahmed' is an Arabic name, many translators misunderstood it to be Ahm at hi and translated the mantra as "I alone have acquired the real wisdom of my father".
- (ii) The Prophet was given eternal law i.e. Shari'ah.
- (iii) The Rishi was enlightened by the Shari'ah of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). The Glorious Qur'an says in Surah Sabaa:

*"We have not sent thee but as a universal
(Messenger) to men, giving them glad tidings,
and warning them (against sin), but most men understand not."
(Al Qur'an 34:28)*

i. Muhammad (pbuh) prophesied as ‘Narashansa’

The word ‘Narashansa’ is the combination of ‘Nar’ and ‘Aashansa’; ‘Nar’ means ‘man’ and ‘Aashansa’ means ‘praised’, therefore ‘Narashansa’ means ‘the praised man’.

Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) is mentioned as ‘Narashansa’ in the Hindu scriptures in several places including:

- (i) Rigveda Book 1 Hymn 13 Verse 3
- (ii) Rigveda Book 1 Hymn 18 Verse 9
- (iii) Rigveda Book 1 Hymn 106 Verse 4
- (iv) Rigveda Book 1 Hymn 142 Verse 3
- (v) Rigveda Book 2 Hymn 3 Verse 2
- (vi) Rigveda Book 3 Hymn 29 Verse 11
- (vii) Rigveda Book 5 Hymn 5 Verse 2
- (viii) Rigveda Book 7 Hymn 2 Verse 2
- (ix) Rigveda Book 10 Hymn 64 Verse 3
- (x) Rigveda Book 10 Hymn 182 Verse 2
- (xi) Samaveda Uttararchika Mantra 1349
- (xii) Vajasaneya Samhita white Yajurveda Chapter 29 Verse 27
- (xiii) Taittiriya Sanhita 1 Chapter 6 Verse 4
- (xiv) Taittiriya Sanhita 1 Chapter 7 Verse 4
- (xv) Yajurveda Chapter 20 Verse 37
- (xvi) Yajurveda Chapter 20 Verse 57
- (xvii) Yajurveda Chapter 21 Verse 31
- (xviii) Yajurveda Chapter 21 Verse 55
- (xix) Yajurveda Chapter 28 Verse 2
- (xx) Yajurveda Chapter 28 Verse 19
- (xxi) Yajurveda Chapter 28 Verse 42

j. Kalki Avataar

It is mentioned in Bhagwata Purana Khand 12 Adhyay 2 Shlokas 18-20:

“It is in the house of Vishnuyasa, the noble souled Brahmana chief of the village called Sambhala that Lord Kalki will be incarnated.”

“The Lord of the universe, endowed with eight spiritual powers and excellences was unsurpassed in splendour and glory. Riding on a fleet horse called Devadatta, he would traverse over the whole earth or the horse; will massacre with his sword capable of subjugating the crores and crores of robbers and wicked miscreants who posed themselves as kings.”

It is mentioned in Bhagwata Purana Khand 1 Adhyay 3 Shloka 25:

“Then in the twilight of the Kali age, when kings will be as good as robbers, this protector of the world will be born of Vishnuyasa under the name Kalki.”

The following description of the Kalki Avataar (i.e. the final Avataar) is given in the verses of Kalki Purana Chapter 2 Verses 4, 5, 7, 11 & 15:

1. Mother's name 'Sumati' i.e. 'Aaminah'

The name of his mother will be Sumati, which means 'gentle' and 'thoughtful', Prophet Muhammad's (pbuh) mother's name was 'Aaminah', which means 'peaceful' and 'gentle'.

2. Father's name 'Vishnuyasa' i.e. Abdullah.

His father's name will be 'Vishnuyasa' which means 'worshipper of Vishnu' i.e. 'worshipper of God'. Muhammad's (pbuh) father's name was 'Abdullah' which means 'obedient worshipper of Allah' i.e. God.

3. Born in 'Sambhala' i.e. Makkah

He will be born in a village called 'Sambhala' which means 'house of peace and security'. Makkah is known as 'Darul Aman', which means 'house of peace and security'.

4. Born in house of Chief Priest.

He will be born in the house of chief of the village 'Sambhala'. Muhammad (pbuh) was born in the house of the chief of the Kaaba.

5. Born on the 12th day of Madhav i.e. Rabbi Awwal.

It is prophesied that the Kalki Avataar will be born on the 12th day of the bright (first) half of the month of Madhav. It is a historical fact Muhammad (pbuh) was born on the 12th day of the bright half of the month of Rabiul Awwal.

6. He will be the 'Antim' or final Avataar

He has been described as the 'Antim' i.e. 'the last and final' of all the Avataars. The Qur'an also mentions:

*Muhammad is not the father of any of your men,
but (he is) the Messenger of Allah,
and the Seal of the Prophets:
And Allah has full knowledge of all things.
(Al Qur'an 33:40)*

Thus the Qur'an states that Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) is the seal, i.e. last and final Prophet of Allah.

7. Will receive knowledge on the mountain from the Lord and then go towards North and come back.

The Kalki Avataar will go to the mountain and receive knowledge from Parsuram, then go towards the north and come back. Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) did go to Jabl-e-Noor i.e. the Mountain of Light, where he received the first Revelation from Archangel Gabriel. Later he went north to Madeenah and then made a victorious return to Makkah.

8. He will have the most graceful personality.

The Kalki Avataar will have unparallel grace. The Glorious Qur'an mentions in Surah Al Qalam Chapter 68 Verse 4:

*"And thou standest on an exalted standard of character."
(Al Qur'an 68:4)*

9. Endowed with eight special qualities

Kalki Avataar will be endowed with eight special qualities. These qualities are wisdom, respectable lineage, self-control, revealed knowledge, valour, measured speech, utmost charity and gratitude. Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) had all these eight special qualities:

a) Wisdom – He was very wise. It is no wonder that several people approached him for guidance, even before he claimed to be a prophet.

b) Respectable lineage – He belonged to the noble tribe of Quraysh who were the caretakers of the sacred Ka'bah.

c) Self-control – He was the best example of self-control. From history, we learn that his enemies on many occasions tried to instigate him. However, he was always patient and responded wisely.

d) Revealed knowledge – Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) received the last and final revelation of God, which is the Glorious Qur'an through Archangel Gabriel.

e) Valour – Muhammad (pbuh) possessed great physical strength and courage. He took active part in the battles against his enemies and most of such battles were fought in self-defence against aggression by the other party.

f) Measured speech – Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) spoke with emphasis and deliberation that people could not forget what he said. In his intercourse with others he would sit silent among his companions for a long time but when he spoke his speech was eloquent and full of meaning and advice.

g) Utmost charity – Muhammad (pbuh) was very charitable and never disappointed anyone who asked for help even in situations when he himself was in financial difficulties. Many poor people lived only on his generosity.

h) Gratefulness – Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) was known for his gratefulness. He showed immense gratitude to the Ansaars i.e. the helpers from the city of Madeenah.

10. Teacher of the World.

The Kalki Avataar will be the saviour of the world i.e. he will guide and teach the world. Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) did not only guide and save the Arabs but the whole humankind. The Qur'an mentions:

*"We have not sent thee
but as a universal Messenger to men,
giving them glad tidings, and warning them
(against sin), but most men understand not."
(Al Qur'an 34:28)*

11. Shiva will present a steed to Kalki Avataar

It is prophesied that Shiva will present an extraordinary steed to the Kalki

Avataar. Muhammad (pbuh) received a steed from Almighty God, which was known as 'Buraq' and whose speed transcended time.

12. He will ride a horse and carry a sword.

Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) received a heavenly steed from Almighty God called 'Buraq' on which he made his heavenly journey known as 'Me'raaj' or the 'Ascension to the heavens'. Moreover, we also learn from the history of the Prophet (pbuh) that he himself took part in battles, most of which were fought in self-defence, and on many such occasions, he rode a horse and carried a sword in his hand.

13. He will subdue the wicked

It is mentioned that Kalki Avataar will subdue the wicked. It was prophet Muhammad (pbuh) who purified (transformed) bandits and miscreants and established them on the path of truth. Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) came at a time, which was known as 'Yaumul Jahiliyah', which means the 'age or era of ignorance'. People indulged in various types of vices. Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) brought them from darkness to light.

14. He will overpower the devil with four companions

It is prophesied that Kalki Avataar, with four of his companions, will disarm Kali i.e. the devil. Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), with his four most trusted companions, fought against the mischief and the evil of the devil. These four companions were Abu Bakr, Umar, Uthman and Ali (may Allah be pleased with them). These four companions later became the first four Khalifahs and spread the religion of Islam. In Islamic parlance these four are referred to as 'the rightly guided Caliphs'.

15. He will be assisted by angels.

The Kalki Avataar will be assisted by angels in the battlefield. In the battle of Badr, Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) was assisted by angels who descended from the heavens.

This is also mentioned in the Qur'an in:

Surah Ale Imran Chapter 3 Verses 123-125

Surah Al Anfaal Chapter 8 Verse 9

THE CONCEPT OF LIFE AFTER DEATH IN HINDUISM AND ISLAM

11

LIFE AFTER DEATH IN HINDUISM

1. Concept of rebirth in Hinduism – Reincarnation or Transmigration of Souls

Most of the Hindus believe in the cycle of birth, death and rebirth, which is called 'Samsara'. 'Samsara' or the doctrine of rebirth is also known as the theory of reincarnation or of transmigration of the soul. This doctrine is considered to be the basic tenet of Hinduism. According to the doctrine of rebirth, differences between individuals, even at the time of their birth are due to their past 'karma' i.e. actions done in the past birth. For example, if one child is born healthy while another is handicapped or blind, the differences are attributed to their deeds in their previous lives. Those who believe in this theory reason that since all actions may not bear fruit in this life, there has to be another life for facing or reaping the consequences of one's actions.

a) It is mentioned in the Bhagavad Gita:

"As a person puts on new garments, giving up old ones, the soul similarly accepts new material bodies, giving up the old and useless ones." (Bhagavad Gita 2:22)

b) The Doctrine of rebirth is also described in Brhadaranyaka Upanishad:

"As a Caterpillar which has wriggled to the top of a blade of grass draws itself over to a new blade, so does the soul, after it has put aside its body draws itself over to a new existence." (Brhadaranyaka Upanishad 4:4:3)

2. 'Karma' – The law of Cause and Effect

'Karma' means act, deed, action or activity and refers not only to action undertaken by the body but also to those undertaken by the mind. 'Karma' is actually action and reaction or the law of cause and effect. It is explained by the saying, "As we sow, so shall we reap". A farmer cannot sow wheat and

expect rice to grow. Similarly, every good thought, word or deed begets a similar reaction which affects our next life, and every unkind thought, harsh word and evil deed comes back to harm us in this life or in the next life.

3. 'Dharma' – Righteous Duties

'Dharma' means what is right or righteous duties. This includes what is right for the individual, family, the class or caste and also for the universe itself. In order to achieve good karma, life should be lived according to Dharma, otherwise it will result in bad karma. Dharma affects both, the present life and the future as well.

4. 'Moksha' – Liberation from the Cycle of Rebirth

'Moksha' means liberation from the cycle of rebirth or of 'Samsara'. The ultimate aim of every Hindu is that one day the cycle of rebirth will be over and he will not have to be reborn again. This can only happen if there is no karma to cause an individual to be reborn i.e. it loses its good and bad karma.

5. Rebirth is not mentioned in the Vedas

The important point worth noting is that the doctrine of rebirth is not postulated, propounded nor even mentioned anywhere in what are considered to be the most authentic Hindu scriptures i.e. the Vedas. The Vedas make no mention of the entire concept of transmigration of souls.

6. 'Punarjanam' does not mean cycle of rebirth but means 'Life after Death'

The common word used for the doctrine of rebirth is 'Punarjanam'. In Sanskrit 'Punar' or 'Puna', means, 'next time' or 'again' and 'Janam' means 'life'. Therefore 'Punarjanam' means 'next life' or the life 'hereafter'. It does not mean coming to life on earth again and again as a living creature.

If one reads many of the references to 'Punarjanam' in Hindu Scriptures besides the Vedas, keeping the life in the Hereafter in mind, one gets the concept of the next life but not of rebirths or of life again and again. This is true for several quotations of the Bhagavad Gita and Upanishads which speak of Punarjanam.

This concept of repeated births or of cycle of rebirth was developed after the Vedic period. This doctrine was included by humans in subsequent Hindu

scriptures including the Upanishads, Bhagavad Gita and the Puranas in a conscious attempt to rationalize and explain the differences between different individuals at birth and the different circumstances in which people find themselves in, with the concept that Almighty God is not unjust. So to say that since God is not unjust, the inequalities and differences between people are due to their deeds in their past lives.

Islam has a rational answer to this which we shall discuss later InshaAllah.

7. Life after Death in the Vedas

There is reference to life after death in the Vedas. It is mentioned in:

a. Rigveda Book 10 Hymn 16 Verse 4:

“The unborn portion, burn that, *Agni*, with thy heat; let thy flame, thy splendour, consume it; with those glorious members which thou hast given him, *Jatavedas*, bear him to the world (of the virtuous).” (Rigveda 10:16:4)

The Sanskrit word ‘Sukritamu Lokam’ means ‘the word of the virtuous’ or ‘region of the pious’ referring to the Hereafter.

b. Rigveda Book 10 Hymn 16 Verse 5 says:

“... Putting on (Celestial) life, let the remains (of bodily like) depart: let him, *Jatavedas* be associated with a body.” (Rigveda 10:16:5)

This verse too refers to a second life i.e. life after death.

8. Paradise – ‘Swarg’ in the Vedas

‘Swarg’ i.e. Paradise, is described in several places in the Vedas including.:

a) Atharvaveda Book 4 Hymn 34 Verse 6 (*Devi Chand*)

“May all these streams of butter, with their banks of honey, flowing with distilled water, and milk and curds and water reach thee in domestic life enhancing thy pleasure. May thou acquire completely these things strengthening the soul in diverse ways.” (Atharvaveda 4:34:6 - *Devi Chand*)

Atharvaveda Book 4 Hymn 34 Verse 6 (Veda Prakash)

“Having pools of clarified butter, stocks of sweet honey, and having exhilarating drinks for water, full of milk and curds, may all these streams flow to us in the world of happiness swelling sweetly. May our lakes full of lotuses be situated near us.” (Atharvaveda 4:34:6 - *Veda Prakash*)

b) It is mentioned in Atharvaveda:

“Bereft of physical bodies, pure, cleansed with the wind, brilliant, they go to a brilliant world. The fire does not cause burning in their male organ. In the world of happiness they get plenty of women.” (Atharvaveda 4:34:2)

c) It is mentioned in Atharvaveda:

“May the realised ones, first of all, take the vital breath under their control from the limbs in which it has been circulating. Go to heaven stay firm with all the parts of your body. Attain the world of light and emancipation, following the path of the enlightened ones (your predecessors).” (Atharvaveda 2:34:5)

d) It is mentioned in Atharvaveda:

“O both of you, start to accomplish it, make determined effort to accomplish it. Those having unflinching faith attain this abode of happiness. Whatever ripe offerings you have made in fire of sacrifice, may both, the husband and wife, stand united to guard them with care.” (Atharvaveda 6:122:3)

e) It is mentioned in the Rigveda:

“O Aila, the loud-sounding clouds, these divines say to you, since you are indeed subject to death, let your progeny propitiate your revered cosmic forces with oblations, then alone you shall rejoice (with me) in heaven.” (Rigveda 10:95:18)

9. Hell – ‘Nark’ in the Vedas

‘Nark’ or ‘Hell’ is also described in the Vedas and the Sanskrit word used is ‘Narakasthanam’. It is also mentioned in Rigveda:

“May the bounteous fire-divine, consume them with his fiercely glowing sharp jaws – like flames, who disregard the commandments and steadfast laws of most venerable and sagacious Lord.” (Rigveda 4:5:4)

LIFE AFTER DEATH IN ISLAM

1. Live once in this world and then be resurrected in the Hereafter

It is mentioned in the Qur’an:

*How can ye reject the faith in Allah?
Seeing that ye were without life,
and He gave you life; then will He cause you to die,*

and will again bring you to life; and again to Him will ye return.
(Al Qur'an 2:28)

Islam states that a human being comes into this world only once, and after he dies, he is again resurrected on the day of judgement. Depending on his deeds he will either dwell in heaven (paradise) or he will dwell in hell.

2. This Life is a test for the Hereafter

It is mentioned in the Qur'an:

*He who created Death and Life,
that He may try which of you is best in deed;
and He is the exalted in Might, Oft-Forgiving.*
(Al Qur'an 67:2)

This life that we lead in this world is a test for the Hereafter. If we follow the commandments of the Almighty Creator and pass His test, we shall by His Mercy inshaAllah enter paradise, which is eternal bliss. If we do not follow the commandments of our Creator and fail the test then we shall be put into hell.

3. Full Recompense on the Day of Judgement

It is mentioned in the Qur'an:

*Every soul shall have a test of death:
and only on the Day of Judgment shall
you be paid your full recompense.
Only he who is saved far from the fire and admitted to the
Garden will have attained the object (of life):
For the life of this world is but goods and chattels of deception.*
(Al Qur'an 3:185)

4. Paradise – 'Jannah'

Jannah i.e. paradise is a place of perpetual bliss. In Arabic, 'jannah' literally means 'the garden'. The Qur'an describes paradise in great detail, such as gardens underneath which rivers run. It contains rivers of milk unchanging in flavour and rivers of purified honey. In paradise is fruit of every kind. No fatigue shall be felt in paradise neither shall there be any idle talk. There shall be no cause of sin, difficulty, anxiety, trouble or hardship. Paradise shall thus have peace and bliss.

Paradise is described in several verses of the Qur'an including:

i.	Surah Ale Imran	Chapter 3 Verse 15
ii.	Surah Ale Imran	Chapter 3 Verse 198
iii.	Surah An Nisa'	Chapter 4 Verse 57
iv.	Surah Al Ma'idah	Chapter 5 Verse 119
v.	Surah At Tawbah	Chapter 9 Verse 72
vi.	Surah Al Hijr	Chapter 15 Verses 45-48
vii.	Surah Al Kahf	Chapter 18 Verse 31
viii.	Surah Al Hajj	Chapter 22 Verse 23
ix.	Surah Faatir	Chapter 35 Verses 33-35
x.	Surah Yaa Seen	Chapter 36 Verses 55-58
xi.	Surah As Saaffaat	Chapter 37 Verses 41-49
xii.	Surah Az Zukhruf	Chapter 43 Verses 68-73
xiii.	Surah Ad Dukhaan	Chapter 44 Verses 51-57
xiv.	Surah Muhammad	Chapter 47 Verse 15
xv.	Surah Al Toor	Chapter 52 Verses 17-24
xvi.	Surah Al Rahmaan	Chapter 55 Verses 46-77
xvii.	Surah Al Waaqi'ah	Chapter 56 Verses 11-38

5. Hell – 'Jahannam'

Hell is a place of torment where evil-doers undergo the most terrible pain and suffering caused by being burnt by hell fire, a fire whose fuel is men and stones. Further, the Qur'an states that as many times as their skins are burnt, the residents of hell shall be given fresh skin so that they feel the pain. Hell is described in several Verses of the Qur'an including:

Surah Al Baqarah	Chapter 2 Verse 24
Surah An Nisa'	Chapter 4 Verse 56
Surah Ibraheem	Chapter 14 Verses 16-17
Surah Al Hajj	Chapter 22 Verses 19-22
Surah Faatir	Chapter 35 Verses 36-37

6. Logical concept for differences in different Individuals

In Hinduism the differences in two individuals at birth is explained by stating past karma i.e. actions of the previous life, as the cause of the differences. There is no scientific or logical proof or evidence for the cycle of rebirth.

How does Islam explain these differences? The Islamic explanation for these differences in different individuals is given in Surah Al Mulk:

*"He who created death and life,
that He may try which of you is best in Deed;
and He is the Exalted in Might, Oft-Forgiving."
(Al Qur'an 67:2)*

This life that we live is the test for the Hereafter.

THE CONCEPT OF FATE AND DESTINY IN HINDUISM AND ISLAM

12

1. Concept of Destiny i.e. 'Qadr' in Islam

'Qadr' is the concept of 'destiny'. Certain aspects of human life are predestined by our Creator Almighty Allah. For example, where and when will a person be born, the surroundings and conditions in which he will be born, how long will he live and where and when will he die. These are predetermined by the Creator.

1. Concept of Destiny in Hinduism

The Concept of Destiny in Hinduism is somewhat similar to that of Islam.

2. Present conditions are a test

There are several verses in the Qur'an which clearly specify that our Creator Almighty Allah tests us in several different ways.

It is mentioned in the Qur'an:

a. *"Or do ye think that ye shall enter the Garden (of Bliss) without such (trials) as came to those who passed away before you? they encountered suffering and adversity, and were so shaken in spirit that even*

The Messenger and those of faith who were with him cried: 'When (will come) the help of Allah?'

Ah! Verily, the help of Allah is (always) near!" (Al Qur'an 2:214)

b. *"Do men think that they will be left alone on saying, 'we believe', and that they will not be tested?" (Al Qur'an 29:2)*

c. *"Every soul shall have a taste of death: and We test you by evil and by good by way of trial - to Us must ye return." (Al Qur'an 21:35)*

d. *"Be sure we shall test you with something of fear and hunger, some loss in goods or lives or the fruits (of your toil), but give glad tidings to those who patiently persevere."*
(Al Qur'an 2:155)

e. *"And know ye that your possessions and your progeny are but a trial; and that it is Allah with whom lies your highest reward. "* (Al Qur'an 8:28)

3. Judgement will be based on the facility provided

Each and every human being undergoes a test in this world. The test that each individual undergoes differs from person to person, depending upon the comforts and the conditions in which Allah puts an individual. He passes His judgement accordingly. For example, if a teacher sets a difficult examination paper, the assessment and evaluation of the answer sheets is usually lenient. On the other hand if the teacher sets an easy examination paper, the assessment and evaluation is strict.

Similarly, some human beings are born in rich families while some others are born in poor families. Islam instructs every rich Muslim, who has a saving of more than Nisaab level (i.e. 85 gms of gold) to give 2.5% of his excess wealth in obligatory charity every lunar year. This is called the system of 'Zakaat' in Islam. Some rich persons may be giving the minimum required charity; some may be giving less than what is required while others may not be giving at all. Thus for rich men, some may get full marks in Zakaat i.e. charity, some may get less while some may get nil. On the other hand, a poor person who has a saving of less than 85 gms of gold gets full marks in Zakaat, because he does not have to give this compulsory charity.

Any normal human being would like to be rich and not poor. Some may appreciate the rich people and sympathise with the poor, not knowing that the same wealth may take that person to hell if he does not give charity and due to this wealth he falls prey to temptations of character. Poverty for the poor man may be an easy path to paradise if he follows the other commandments of Almighty God. The converse may be true. A wealthy man may earn paradise by his philanthropy and humility, while a poor person who covets luxuries and hence resorts to unfair means to get them may be in trouble on the day of judgement.

4. Children born with congenital defects are a test for their parents

Some children are born healthy while others are born handicapped or with a congenital defect. Irrespective of whether a child is born healthy or handicapped, in Islam he is 'Ma'soom' i.e. sinless. There is no question of the child being handicapped due to a carried forward baggage of past sins from 'a previous life'. Such a belief will not inculcate a charitable attitude in others. Others might say that the child deserves his birth defects or the handicap since it is a result of his 'bad karma'.

Islam states that such handicaps are a type of test for the parents whether they are yet thankful towards their Creator or not. Do they retain their patience? Do they continue to persevere? There is a famous saying that a person was sad because he had no shoes to wear until he saw a person who had no feet.

It is mentioned in the Qur'an:

*And know ye that your possessions
and your progeny are but a trial;
and that it is Allah with Whom lies
your highest reward. (Al Qur'an 8:28)*

Allah (swt) may be testing the parents whether they yet are thankful to their Creator or not. May be the parents are righteous and pious and deserve Jannah. If Allah wants to give them a higher place in Jannah, He will test them further, for example by giving a handicapped child. Yet if they are thankful to their Creator, they will deserve a higher reward i.e. the Jannatul Firdous.

There is a general rule that the more difficult the test, higher is the reward. To pass graduation in Arts and Commerce is relatively easy and if you pass you are called as a graduate without any special title but if you graduate in the field of medicine which is comparatively a much more difficult examination, besides becoming a graduate you are also called a 'doctor' and the title 'Dr' is put in front of your name.

In the same way Allah (swt) tests different people in different ways, some with health, some with disease, some with wealth, some with poverty, some with more intelligence, some with less, and depending upon the facilities and faculties He gives an individual, He tests accordingly.

Thus the main reason for the differences amongst human beings is that this life is a test for the Hereafter. Life after death is mentioned in the Qur'an as well as the Vedas.

Individual differences are not due to transmigration of souls or 'Samsara', These beliefs were added on in subsequent scriptures like the Upanishads, Bhagavad Gita, Puranas and the Manusmriti. The repetitive cycle of birth and death, birth and death, was unknown and unheard of in the Vedic period.

THE CONCEPT OF WORSHIP IN HINDUISM AND ISLAM

13

PILLARS OF ISLAM

ISLAMIC CREED

It is mentioned in Sahih Al Bukhari:

Narrated Ibn Umar (r.a.) that Allah's Messenger (pbuh) said: Islam is based on (the following) five (principles):

Narrated Ibn Umar (r.a.) that Allah's Messenger (pbuh) said: Islam is based on (the following) five (principles):

1. To testify that none has the right to be worshipped except Allah and that Muhammad (pbuh) is the slave and messenger of Allah.
2. Iqaamat-us-Salaah (to perform and establish prayers).
3. To pay Zakaat.
4. To perform Hajj (i.e. pilgrimage to Makkah).
5. To observe Saum (i.e. fast) during the month of Ramadhan.
(Sahih Al Bukhari Vol. 1 Book of Eemaan Chapter 1 Hadith 7)

1. TESTIMONY OF FAITH:

The First Pillar of Islam i.e. to declare, proclaim, testify and bear witness that no entity, deity or concept is worthy of worship, devotion, obedience and submission except Allah (swt) and to declare, proclaim, testify and bear witness that Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) is the last and final Messenger of Allah. This pillar of faith has already been discussed in the Pillar of Eemaan.

2. SALAAH

a. The second Pillar of Islam is Salaah

'Salaah' is usually translated in English as 'prayer'. To pray means to beseech or to ask for help. In Salaah we Muslims do not merely ask for help

from Almighty Allah but we also praise Him and receive guidance from Him. I personally prefer describing it as 'programming towards righteousness'. To appreciate this better, consider that during salaah, after Surah Fatiha, an Imaam may recite:

*"O ye who believe!
Intoxicants and gambling,
(dedication of) stones,
and (divination by) arrows,
are an abomination –
of satan's handiwork;
eschew such (abomination),
that you may prosper."
(Al Qur'an 5:90)*

Allah (swt) guides us, through this verse of the Qur'an which is recited by the Imaam during salaah, that we should not imbibe intoxicants, we should not indulge in gambling, idol worship or fortune telling. All these are satan's handiwork and we should abstain from these if we wish to prosper.

The English word 'prayer' does not denote the complete meaning of 'salaah' in its full and true sense.

b. Prayer restrains you from shameful and unjust deeds

It is mentioned in the Qur'an:

*Recite what is sent
of the book by inspiration
to thee, and establish
regular Prayer: for prayer
restrains from shameful
and unjust deeds;
and remembrance of Allah
is the greatest (thing of life)
without doubt. And Allah knows
the (deeds) that ye do.
(Al Qur'an 29:45)*

c. Five times Salaah for healthy souls

For a healthy body, humans require about three meals a day. In a similar

manner, for a healthy soul, it is required that we offer Salaah a minimum of five times everyday.

Our Creator Allah (swt) has prescribed a minimum of five times salaah a day for humans in Surah Al Israa' Chapter 17 Verse 78 and in Surah Taa Haa Chapter 20 Verse 130.

d. Prostration is the most important part of Salaah

The most important part of Salaah is the 'Sujood' i.e. Prostration.

i. It is mentioned in the Qur'an:

*"O Mary! Worship thy Lord devoutly;
prostrate thyself, and bow down (in prayer)
with those who bow down." (Al Qur'an 3:43)*

ii. "O ye who believe!

*Bow down, prostrate yourselves,
And adore your Lord; and do good;
That ye may prosper." (Al Qur'an 22:77)*

Similarities

One of the types of prayers in Hinduism is 'Shashtang'

There are various different types of prayers and modes of worship in Hinduism. One of the types is 'shashtang'. The word 'shashtang' is made up of 'sa' and 'asht' which means eight and 'ang' which means 'parts of the body'. Thus 'shastang' is a mode of worship touching eight parts of the body. The best way a person can do this is like Muslims who prostrate in their Salaah touching their forehead, nose, two hands, two knees and two feet.

Idol worship is prohibited in Hinduism

i. Idol worship, though very common amongst the Hindus, is prohibited in Hinduism. It is mentioned in Bhagavad Gita Chapter 7 Verse 20:

"Those whose intelligence has been stolen by material desires surrender unto demigods i.e. idols." (Bhagavad Gita 7:20)

ii. It is also mentioned in Shwetashvatara Upanishad Chapter 4 Verse 19, as well as in Yajurveda Chapter 32 Verse 3:

"There is no image of Him."

(Yajurveda 32:3 and Shwetashvatara Upanishad 4:19)

iii. It is also mentioned in Yajurveda Chapter 40 Verse 9:

“They enter darkness those who worship natural things (e.g. air, water, fire, etc.). They sink deeper in darkness those who worship sambhuti i.e. created things (e.g. table, chair, car, idol, etc.).” (Yajurveda 40:9)

3. ZAKAAT

a. ZAKAAT’ MEANS ‘PURIFICATION’ AND ‘GROWTH’

‘Zakaat’ is the third pillar of Islam which means ‘purification’ and ‘growth’.

b. 2.5% IN CHARITY

Every rich Muslim who has a saving which is more than the minimum level called ‘Nisaab’ which is 85 gms of gold, should give 2.5% of his excess wealth in charity every lunar year.

c. IF ALL RICH GIVE ZAKAAT NO ONE WILL DIE OF HUNGER

If every rich human being gives Zakaat, then poverty will be eradicated from this world. There will not be a single human being who will die of hunger.

d. ZAKAAT ENSURES THAT WEALTH DOES NOT CIRCULATE ONLY AMONGST THE RICH

One of the reasons for Zakaat is mentioned in Surah Al Hashr:

*“In order that it (wealth) may not (merely) circulate between the wealthy amongst you.”
(Al Qur’an 59:7)*

e. CHARITY IN HINDUISM:

Charity is also prescribed in Hinduism.

i. In Rigveda Book 10 Hymn 117 Verse 5:

“Let the rich satisfy the poor implorer, and bend his eye upon a longer pathway. Riches come now to one, now to another, and like the wheels of cars are ever rolling.” (Translation by Ralph Griffith)

“It is expected of every rich man to satisfy the poor implorer; let the rich person have a distant vision (for a rich of today may not remain rich tomorrow). Remember that riches revolve from one man to another, as revolve the wheels of a chariot.”

(Translation by Satyaprakash Sarasvati & Satyakam Vidyalkar)

ii. Charity has been prescribed in Bhagavad Gita in several places including Chapter 17 Verse 20 and Chapter 16 Verse 1.

4. 'SAUM' – FASTING

a. 'Saum' or 'fasting', is the fourth pillar of Islam.

Every healthy adult Muslim is supposed to abstain from eating and drinking, from dawn to sunset, in the complete lunar month of Ramadhaan.

b. Fasting prescribed for self-restraint

The reason for fasting has been mentioned in the Qur'an:

*"O ye who believe!
Fasting is prescribed to you
as it was prescribed
to those before you,
that ye may (learn) self-restraint."
(Al Qur'an 2:183)*

Today psychologists inform us that if a person can control his hunger, it is very likely that he will be able to control most of his desires.

c. Fasting discourages alcoholism, smoking and other addictions

Fasting for one complete month is a good opportunity for giving up one's wrong habits. If a person can abstain from drinking alcohol, from dawn to sunset, he can very well abstain from alcohol from the cradle to the grave. If a person can abstain from smoking, from dawn to sunset, he can very well abstain from smoking from the cradle to the grave.

d. Medical benefits of Islamic Fasting

There are various medical benefits of fasting. Fasting increases the absorption of the intestine; it also decreases the cholesterol level.

Fasting in Hinduism

There are different types and methods of fasting in Hinduism. According to Manusmriti Chapter 6 Verse 24:

"Fasting has been prescribed for a month for purification."

(Manusmriti edited by Dr R. N. Sharma)

Fasting has also been prescribed in Manusmriti Chapter 4 Verse 222 and Manusmriti Chapter 11 Verse 204

5. HAJJ – PILGRIMAGE

a. Description

Hajj is the fifth pillar of Islam. Every adult Muslim who has the means to perform hajj i.e. pilgrimage to the holy city of Makkah should at least perform Hajj once in his life time.

b. Universal Brotherhood

Hajj is a practical example and demonstration of universal brotherhood. The hajj is the largest annual gathering in the world where about 2.5 million people from different parts of the world gather – from USA from UK, from Malaysia, from Indonesia, from Australia, from India and other parts of the world. All pilgrims wear two pieces of unsown cloth, preferably white, such that you cannot differentiate whether a person is rich or poor, king or pauper. People of all races and of all colours gather together in unity to worship the one Creator.

c. Pilgrimage in Hinduism

i There are various places of pilgrimage in Hinduism. One of the sacred places mentioned in Rigveda Book 3 Hymn 29 Verse 4 is:

“Ilaspada, which is situated at Nabha prithvi.”

‘Ila’ means ‘God’ or ‘Allah’, and ‘spad’ means ‘place’, therefore ‘Ilaspada’ means ‘place of God’. ‘Nabha’ means centre and ‘prithvi’ means ‘earth’. Thus this verse of the Veda prescribes pilgrimage to a place of God situated at the center of the earth.

The Sanskrit-English dictionary (M. Monier Williams – edition 2002) states that “Ilaspada is ‘Name of a Tirtha’ i.e. place of pilgrimage – however its location is not known”.

ii. According to the Qur’an:

*The first House (of worship)
appointed for men was that at Bakka;
full of blessing and of guidance
for all kinds of beings.
(Al Quran 3:96)*

'Bakkah' is another name for Makkah and we know today that Makkah is situated at the center of the earth.

Later after seven verses i.e. Rigveda Book 3 Hymn 29 Verse 11, Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) is mentioned as 'Narashansa'. Thus we can safely conclude that this Ilaspada, place of pilgrimage mentioned in Rigveda is Makkah.

iii. Makkah is also mentioned as Ilaspada i.e. Allah's holy place in Rigveda Book 1 Hymn 128 Verse 1.

THE CONCEPT OF JIHAAD IN HINDUISM AND ISLAM

14

JIHAD IN ISLAM AND IN HINDUISM

One of the greatest misconceptions about Islam, not only amongst the non-Muslims but even amongst the Muslims, is concerning the concept of 'Jihaad'. Non-Muslims as well as Muslims think that any war fought by any Muslim for whatever purpose, be it good or bad, is Jihaad.

'Jihaad' is an Arabic word derived from 'Jahada', which means 'to strive' or 'to struggle'. For example, if a student strives to pass in the examination he is doing jihaad.

In the Islamic context, 'Jihaad' means to strive against one's own evil inclinations. It also means to strive to make the society better. It also includes the right to fight in self-defence or to fight in the battlefield against oppression and against aggression.

1. Jihaad does not mean 'holy war'

Not only non-Muslim scholars, but even some Muslim "scholars" mistranslate the word 'Jihaad' as 'holy war'. The Arabic word for 'holy war' is 'harabum muqaddasah' and this word is not to be found anywhere in the Qur'an nor in any Hadith. The word 'holy war' was first used to describe the crusades of the Christians who killed thousands of people in the name of Christianity. Today, this term 'holy war' is used to falsely describe Jihaad, which merely means 'to strive'. In an Islamic context, Jihaad means 'to strive in the way of Allah for a righteous cause'. i.e. Jihaad fi Sabeelillah.

2. Only one of the several forms of Jihaad is fighting

There are different types of Jihaad i.e., striving. One of the types is striving is fighting in the battlefield against oppression and tyranny.

Many critics of Islam, including Arun Shourie, quote Surah At Tawbah Chapter 9 Verse 5 as:

*“... Fight and slay the Mushrik/Kafir (Hindu)
wherever you find them ...”
(Al Qur'an 9:5)*

If you read the Qur'an you will find this verse exists but you will also realize that it is quoted out of context by Arun Shourie.

The first few verses of Surah At Tawbah before Verse 5 speak about the peace treaty between the Muslims and Mushriks (polytheists) of Makkah. This peace treaty was unilaterally broken by the Mushriks of Makkah. In Verse 5, Allah (swt) gives them an ultimatum to put things straight in four months' time, or else face a declaration of war. It is for the battlefield that Allah says “fight and slay the Mushriks (i.e. the enemies from Makkah) wherever you find them and seize them, beleaguer them, and lie in wait for them in every stratagem of war”.

This verse is revealed and instructs the Muslims to fight in the battlefield and kill the enemy wherever you find them. But natural, any Army General to boost up the morale of the soldiers and to encourage them will say “Don't get scared, fight and kill the enemies, wherever you find them in the battlefield”. Arun Shourie in his book 'The World of Fatwas' after quoting Surah At Tawbah Chapter 9 Verse 5 jumps to Verse 7. Any logical person will realize that Verse 6 has the reply to his allegation.

Surah At Tawbah Chapter 9 Verse 6 says:

*“If one amongst the Mushriks (i.e. the enemies)
ask thee for asylum, grant it to him;
so that he may hear the word of Allah;
and then escort him to where he can be secure.”
(Al Qur'an 9:6)*

Today the most merciful Army General may tell his soldiers to let the enemy go, but Almighty Allah in the Qur'an says if the enemy wants peace do not just let them go but escort them to a place of security. Which army general in today's day and age, or rather in the whole of recorded human history is ever known to have given such merciful instructions? Now will someone ask Mr Arun Shourie why did he deliberately not quote Verse 6?

3. Jihaad (i.e. striving) in the Bhagavad Gita

All the major religions encourage their followers to strive in good works. It is mentioned in Bhagavad Gita:

“Therefore strive for Yoga, (O Arjuna), which is the art of all work.”
(Bhagavad Gita 2:50)

4. Fighting prescribed in the Bhagavad Gita too

a. All the major religions of the world have prescribed fighting, at sometime or the other, especially in self-defence or for fighting against oppression.

Mahabharata is an epic and sacred Scripture of the Hindus, which mainly deals with a fight between the cousins, the Pandavas and the Kauravas. In the battlefield Arjuna prefers not to fight and be killed rather than having his conscience burdened with the killing of his relatives. At this moment, Krishna advises Arjuna in the battlefield and this advice is contained in the Bhagavad Gita. There are several verses in the Bhagavad Gita where Krishna advises Arjuna to fight and kill the enemies even though they are his relatives.

b. It is mentioned in the Bhagavad Gita Chapter 1 Verses 43-46:

“O Krishna, maintainer of the people, I have heard by disciplic succession that those who destroy family traditions dwell always in hell.

Alas, how strange it is that we are preparing to commit greatly sinful acts. Driven by the desire to enjoy royal happiness, we are intent on killing our own kinsmen.

Better for me if the sons of Dhritarashtra, weapons in hand, were to kill me unarmed and unresisting rather on the battlefield.

Arjuna, having thus spoken on the battlefield, cast aside his bow and arrows, and sat down on the chariot, his mind overwhelmed with grief.”

c. Krishna further replies in Bhagavad Gita Chapter 2 Verses 2-3:

“My dear Arjuna, how have these impurities come upon you? They are not at all befitting a man who knows the value of life. They lead not to higher planets but to infamy.

O son of Partha, do not yield to this degrading impotence. It does not become you. Give up such petty weakness of heart and arise, O chastiser of the enemy!”

When Arjuna prefers to be killed unarmed and unresisting rather than fight and kill his cousins Kauravas, Krishna replies to Arjun by saying how this

impure thought has come to you which prevents you from entering heaven. Give up this degrading impotence and weakness of heart and arise, O defeater of enemy.

d. Krishna further says in Bhagavad Gita Chapter 2 Verses 31-33:

“Considering your specific duty as a Kshatriya, you should know that there is no better engagement for you than fighting on religious principles; and so there is no need for hesitation.

O Partha, happy are the Kshatriyas to whom such fighting opportunities come unsought, opening for them the doors of the heavenly planets.

If, however, you do not perform your religious duty of fighting, then you will certainly incur sins for neglecting your duties and thus lose your reputation as a fighter.”

e. There are hundreds of verses in the Bhagavad Gita alone, which encourage fighting and killing, many times more as compared to such verses in the Qur’an.

Imagine if someone were to say that the Bhagavad Gita encourages the killing of the family members to attain paradise, without quoting the context – such a deliberate attempt will be devilish. But within the context if I say that for truth and justice fighting against the evil is compulsory, even if it be against your relatives, it makes sense.

I wonder how come the critics of Islam, especially critics amongst the Hindus, point a finger at the Qur’an when it speaks about fighting and killing unjust enemies. The only possibility I can think of is that they themselves have not read their sacred scriptures such as the Bhagavad Gita, Mahabharata and the Vedas.

f. Critics of Islam including Hindu critics speak against the Qur’an and the Prophet (pbuh) when they say that if you are killed while doing Jihaad i.e. fighting for the truth, you are promised paradise.

Besides quoting Qur’anic Verses they quote Sahih Al Bukhari:

“Allah guarantees that He will admit the Mujaahid in His cause into paradise if he is killed, otherwise he will return him to his home safely with rewards and war booty.” (Sahih Al Bukhari Vol. 4 Book of Jihaad Hadith 2787).

There are various similar verses in Bhagavad Gita guaranteeing a person paradise if he is killed while fighting. Take the example of Bhagavad Gita Chapter 2 Verse 37:

“O son of Kunti, either you will be killed on the battlefield and attain the heavenly planets (paradise), or you will conquer and enjoy the earthly kingdom. Therefore, get up with determination and fight.”

(Bhagavad Gita 2:37)

g. Similarly Rigveda Book 1 Hymn 132 Verses 2 - 6 as well as many other verses of Hindu Scriptures speak about fighting and killing.

5. Explain Jihaad by quoting Scriptures of other Religions

Allah (swt) says in the Qur'an:

Say: "O people Of the Book!

Come to common terms as between us and you.

(Al Qur'an 3:64)

The best way to explain a misconception of Islam is to quote a similar message given in the scripture of other religions. Whenever I have spoken to Hindus who criticize the concept of Jihaad in Islam, the moment I quote similar passages from Mahabharata and Bhagavad Gita, and since they know the outline and the context of the fight in Mahabharata, they immediately agree that if the Qur'an too speaks about a fight between truth and falsehood then they have no objection but rather appreciate the guidance of the Qur'an.

SOME SIMILARITIES BETWEEN THE SCRIPTURES OF HINDUISM AND ISLAM

15

SIMILARITIES BETWEEN QUR'ANIC VERSES AND VEDIC VERSES

There are several verses in the Vedas which have a meaning similar to that of Qur'anic verses:

1. Surah Al Fatihah

a. It is mentioned in Surah Al Fatihah

*Praise be to Allah
the Cherisher and Sustainer of the Worlds. (Al Qur'an 1:2)*

A similar Verse is mentioned in the Rigveda:

"Verily, Great is the Glory of the Divine Creator." (Rigveda 5:81:1)

*b. Most Gracious, Most Merciful
(Al Qur'an 1:3)*

A similar verse is mentioned in the Rigveda:

"The Bounteous Giver." (Rigveda 3:34:1)

*c. Show us the straight way,
the way of those on whom
Thou hast bestowed Thy Grace,
those whose (portion)
is not Wrath,
and who go not astray.
(Al Qur'an 1:6-7)*

A similar verse is mentioned in Yajurveda Chapter 40 Verse 16:

"Lead us to the good path and remove the sin that makes us stray and wander." (Yajurveda 40:16)

A similar message is given in Rigveda Book 1 Hymn 189 Verses 1 - 2.

2. SURAH AL MA'OON

It is mentioned in Surah Al Ma'oon:

*Seest thou one
who denies the Judgement
(to come)?*

*Then such is the (man)
who repulses the orphan
(with harshness).*

*And encourages not
the feeding of the indigent. (Al Qur'an 107:1-3)*

A similar verse is given in Rigveda:

“The man with food in store who, when the needy comes in miserable case begging for bread to eat, hardens his heart against him even when of old he did him service – finds not one to comfort him.” (Rigveda 10:117:2)

SOME OTHER SIMILARITIES BETWEEN THE TEACHINGS OF ISLAM AND HINDUISM

16

1. Prohibition of Alcohol

a. It is mentioned in the Qur'an in Surah Al Ma'idah:

*O Ye who believe!
Intoxicants and gambling
(dedication of) stones,
and (divination by) arrows,
are an abomination –
of Satan's handiwork;
eschew such (abomination),
that ye may prosper.
(Al Qur'an 5:90)*

b. It is mentioned in Manusmriti:

"A priest-killer, a liquor drinker, a thief and a violator of his guru's marriage bed - all of these, and each separately, should be known as men who have committed major crimes."
(Manusmriti 9:235)

Further after two verses it is mentioned in Manusmriti:

"These miserable men - whom no one should eat with, no one should sacrifice for, no one should read to, and no one should marry - must wander the earth excommunicated from all religion."
(Manusmriti 9:238)

A similar message is repeated in Manusmriti Chapter 11 Verse 55:

"Killing a priest, drinking liquor, stealing, violating the guru's marriage bed, and associating with those (who commit these acts) are called the major crimes." (Manusmriti 11:55)

It is further mentioned in Manusmriti:

“For liquor is the defiling dirt excreted from rice, and dirt is said to be evil; therefore a priest, ruler, or commoner should not drink liquor.” (Manusmriti 11:94)

c. Intoxicants / Intoxicating drinks are prohibited in several other verses of Manusmriti including:

- i. Manusmriti Chapter 3 Verse 159
- ii. Manusmriti Chapter 7 Verses 47 & 50
- iii. Manusmriti Chapter 9 Verse 225
- iv. Manusmriti Chapter 11 Verse 151
- v. Manusmriti Chapter 12 Verse 45
- vi. Rigveda Book 8 Hymn 2 Verse 12
- vii. Rigveda Book 8 Hymn 21 Verse 14

2. Prohibition of Gambling

As mentioned earlier, the Glorious Qur'an prohibits gambling in Surah Al Ma'idah Chapter 5 Verse 90.

a. Gambling is also prohibited in the Hindu Scriptures

- i. Rigveda Book 10 Hymn 34 Verse 3:

“The gamester/gambler says, ‘My wife holds me aloof, her mother hates me. The wretched man finds none to comfort him.’” (Rigveda 10:34:3)

- ii. It is further advised in Rigveda:

“Play not with dice: No, cultivate thy corn land. Enjoy the gain and deem that wealth sufficient.” (Rigveda 10:34:13)

- iii. It is mentioned in Manusmriti Chapter 7 Verse 50:

“Drinking, gambling, women (not lawfully wedded wives) and hunting, in that order, he should know to be the very worst four in the group (of vices) born of desire.” (Manusmriti 7:50)

Gambling is also prohibited in several Verses of Manusmriti including:

- i. Manusmriti Chapter 7 Verse 47
- ii. Manusmriti Chapter 9 Verses 221-228
- iii. Manusmriti Chapter 9 Verse 258

3. Prohibition of Fortune Telling

Fortune telling is prohibited in the Qur'an in Surah Al Ma'idah Chapter 5 Verse 90. Similarly, fortune telling is also forbidden in Manusmriti:

"Those who live by announcing good luck, smooth operators, and fortune tellers ... the king should punish them properly, according to their strength and the offence." (Manusmriti 9:258 & 262)

4. Prohibition of Bribing

a. Bribing is prohibited in the Qur'an:

*"And do not eat up
your property among yourselves
for vanities, nor use it
as bait for the judges,
with intent that ye may
eat up wrongfully and knowingly
a little of (other) people's property."
(Al Qur'an 2:188)*

b. Bribing is similarly prohibited in Manusmriti:

"People who take bribes, frauds, deceivers, and gamblers; those who live by announcing good luck; smooth operators and fortune tellers... the king should punish them properly, according to their strength and the offence." (Manusmriti Chapter 9:258 & 262)

5. Prohibition of Pork

a. Prohibition of eating pork is mentioned in the Qur'an in four different places:

- (I) Surah Al Baqarah Chapter 2 Verse 173
- (ii) Surah Al Ma'idah Chapter 5 Verse 3
- (iii) Surah Al An'aam Chapter 6 Verse 145
- (iv) Surah An Nahl Chapter 16 Verse 115

*"Forbidden to you (for food)
are: dead meat, blood,
the flesh of swine, and that
on which hath been invoked
the name of other than Allah;"
(Al Qur'an 5:3)*

b. Eating of pork is similarly prohibited in Hindu Scriptures

(i) Manusmriti Chapter 5 Verse 19:

“Any twice-born person (i.e., brahmin) who knowingly eats mushroom, a dungheap pig, garlic, a village cock, onions, or scallions will fall.” (Manu Smriti 5:19)

(ii) It is also mentioned in Vishnusutra Chapter 5 Verse 49:

“A seller of forbidden meat (such as pork shall be punished in the same way) i.e., shall have one hand, or one foot lopped, off.” (Vishnusutra Chapter 5 Verse 49)

(iii) Baudhayana Prasna Khand 12 Adhyay 5 Verse 3:

“Tame cocks and pigs must not be eaten.” (Baudhayana Prasna 12:5:3)

6. Modesty of Women

a. Human criteria for modesty of women

What constitutes modesty for women varies according to public opinion depending upon the society. For example in some Arab countries, a man staring at a woman is considered immodest. In Indian culture, as long as a man does not touch a woman, he is modest. Therefore the Indian way of greeting is with folded hands. In some European countries, a man who touches a woman to the extent that he only shakes her hand, is considered modest. Touching any other part of a woman's body is immodest. On the other extreme, in some western countries, kissing a woman is within the modesty level, while in yet other western countries, any physical intimate act that a man and woman indulge in is considered within the levels of modesty as long as both are adults and willing partners to such an act. Thus what constitutes modesty for human beings varies depending upon the culture and surroundings. It also varies from age to age in the same country.

A lady wearing miniskirts and shorts is considered modest in western countries but immodest in towns and villages in India, and even in most cities in India. On the other hand, a lady wearing a saree with her belly and navel exposed is considered modest in India but immodest in many other countries.

Let us see what the Islamic and the Hindu scriptures have to say about the modesty of women.

b. Modesty of women according to Islam

The Qur'an first speaks about the modesty of the men and then of the women.

(i) The Qur'an says:

*"Say to the believing men
that they should lower their gaze
and guard their modesty:
that will make for greater purity for them:
and Allah is well acquainted with all that they do."
(Al Qur'an 24:30)*

When a man's glance falls upon a woman and any unashamed thought comes in his mind, he should immediately lower his gaze.

Once a Muslim was staring at a girl for a long time and when I told him that what he is doing is wrong, he replied, "Our beloved prophet (pbuh) said that the first glance is allowed and the second is prohibited, and I have not yet completed half of my first glance".

What the prophet (pbuh) meant was that if you unintentionally look at a woman, do not look at her again or continue looking at her to feast on her beauty. That does not mean that you look at a woman for 10 minutes and then say I have not yet completed my first glance.

The next verse of the Qur'an speaks about the hijab / modesty of the women.

*"And say to the believing women
that they should lower their gaze and guard their modesty;
that they should not display their beauty and ornaments except
what (must ordinarily) appear thereof;
that they should draw their veils over their bosoms
and not display their beauty except
to their husbands, their fathers, their husbands' fathers,
their sons . . ."
(Al Qur'an 24:31)*

ii. Six criteria of Hijab

There are basically six criteria of hijab given in the Qur'an and the authentic Hadith:

1. The first criterion is the extent, which differs between the man and the woman. For men, the level of 'sitr' (i.e. covering) is from navel to the knee, while for women the complete body should be covered except the face and the hands upto the wrists. All the remaining criteria are the same for men and women.
2. Clothes they wear should be loose such that they do not reveal the figure.
3. The clothes should not be transparent or translucent.
4. Clothes should not be glamorous that they attract the attention of the opposite sex.
5. Clothes of one gender should not resemble that of the opposite gender.
6. Clothes should not resemble any sign or symbol of unbelievers.

iii. The reason for hijab for the women is given in Surah Al Ahzaab:

"O Prophet! Tell thy wives and daughters, and the believing women, that they should cast their outer garments over their persons (when abroad): that is most convenient, that they should be known (as such) and not molested. And Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful."
 (Al Qur'an 33:59)

iv Example of twin sisters

Suppose there are identical twin sisters, both of them are equally beautiful. Once while walking down the streets of Mumbai, one of the twin sisters is wearing a miniskirt or shorts, while the other twin sister is wearing the Islamic hijab with the complete body covered with loose clothes except the face and the hands upto the wrists. If both of them are walking and round the corner if there is a hooligan or a ruffian who is waiting for a catch, i.e. waiting to tease a girl, which girl will he tease? The girl wearing the miniskirt or the girl wearing the Islamic hijab? It is pretty obvious that he will tease the girl wearing the miniskirt.

c. Modesty of women according to Hinduism

Hindu scriptures too advise the woman to lower her gaze and to wear a veil for the purpose of protecting her modesty.

i. It is mentioned in the Rigveda:

“Since Brahma has become a dame, cast down thine eyes and look not up. More closely set thy feet. Let none see what the garment veils.”
(Rigveda 8:33:19)

ii. Wearing garments of the opposite sex is similarly forbidden by Hindu scriptures.

It is mentioned in Rigveda Book 10 Hymn 85 Verse 30:

“Unlovely is his body when it glistens with this wicked fiend, what time the husband wraps about his limbs the garment of his wife.”
(Rigveda Book 10:85:30)

(iii) According to Bhavabhuti in his Mahavira Charitro Act II Page 71:

“When Rama sees Parasurama coming towards him, he directs his wife Sita, “Dear one, he is our elder, therefore turn aside and veil yourself”.

(iv) Bhagavad Gita Chapter 16 Verses 2-3:

“Modesty ...belong to godly men endowed with divine nature”.
(Bhagavad Gita 16:2-3)

(v) There are various historical records of Indian women wearing a veil in past centuries. In the book “Art in Gupta and post Gupta coinage”, one of the coins shows a lady having a veil on her head, which hangs down to the shoulders and upper arms.

(vi) Even today, in various villages of India, Hindu women wear a veil covering the head and some even cover their face.

7. Polygamy

1. Definition of Polygamy

Polygamy means a system of marriage whereby one person has more than one spouse. Polygamy can be of two types. One is polygyny where a man marries more than one woman, and the other is polyandry, where a woman

marries more than one man. In Islam, limited polygyny is permitted and polyandry is completely prohibited.

2. The Qur'an is the only religious scripture in the world that says, "marry only one"

The Glorious Qur'an is the only religious book, on the face of this earth, that contains the instruction 'marry only one'. There is no other religious book that instructs men to have only one wife. In none of the religious scriptures – be it the Vedas, the Ramayana, the Mahabharata, the Bhagavad Gita or the Bible, in none of these does one find a restriction on the number of wives. According to these scriptures a man can marry as many women as he wishes. It was only in the last 150 years or so that the Hindu priests and the Christian Church have restricted the number of wives to one.

Many Hindu religious personalities, according to Hindu scriptures, had multiple wives. King Dashrath, the father of Rama, had more than one wife. Krishna had several wives.

In earlier times, Christian men were permitted as many wives as they wished, since the Bible puts no restriction on the number of wives. It was only a few centuries ago that the Church restricted the number of wives to one.

Polygyny is permitted in Judaism. According to Talmudic law, Abraham had two wives, and Solomon had hundreds of wives. The practice of polygyny continued till Rabbi Gershom ben Yehudah (960 CE to 1030 CE) issued an edict against it. The Jewish Sephardic communities living in Muslim countries continued the practice till as late as 1950, until an Act of the Chief Rabbinate of Israel extended the ban on marrying more than one wife.

3. Hindus are more polygynous than Muslims

The report of the 'Committee of the Status of Woman in Islam', published in 1975 mentions on page numbers 66 and 67 that the percentage of polygamous marriages between the year 1951-1961 was 5.06 among the Hindus and only 4.31 among the Muslims. According to Indian law only Muslim men are permitted to have more than one wife. It is illegal for any non-Muslim in India to have more than one wife. Despite it being illegal, Hindus have more multiple wives as compared to the Muslims. One can imagine what would have been the percentage of polygamous marriages among the Hindus if the Indian government had made it legal for them.

Earlier, there was no restriction even on Hindu men with respect to the number of wives allowed. It was only in 1954, when the 'Hindu Marriage Act' was passed, that it became illegal for a Hindu man to have more than one wife. At present it is the Indian Law, and not the Hindu scriptures, that restricts a Hindu man from having more than one wife.

Let us now analyze why Islam allows a man to have more than one wife.

4. The Qur'an permits limited polygyny

As I mentioned earlier, the Qur'an is the only religious book on the face of the earth that says 'marry only one'. The context of this phrase is the following verse from Surah An Nisa' of the Glorious Qur'an:

*"Marry women of your choice two, three, or four;
but if ye fear that ye shall not be able to deal justly (with them),
then (marry) only one."
(Al Qur'an 4:3)*

Before the Qur'an was revealed, there was no upper limit for polygyny and many men had scores of wives, some even hundreds. Islam put an upper limit of four wives. Islam gives a man permission to marry two, three or four women, only on the condition that he deals justly with them. In the same Chapter i.e. Surah An Nisa' Verse 129 says:

*"You are never able to be fair and just as between women,
even if it is your ardent desire."
(Al Qur'an 4:129)*

Therefore, in Islam, polygyny is not a rule but an exception. Many people harbour the misconception that it is compulsory for a Muslim man to marry more than one wife.

Broadly, Islam has five categories of Do's and Don'ts:

- (i) 'Fardh' i.e. compulsory
- (ii) 'Mustahab' i.e. recommended or encouraged
- (iii) 'Mubah' i.e. permissible or allowed
- (iv) 'Makrooh' i.e. not recommended or discouraged
- (v) 'Haraam' i.e. prohibited or forbidden

Polygyny falls in the middle category of things that are permissible or allowed. It is not encouraged or recommended. Islam, and the Muslim society, do not consider a Muslim man who has two, three or four wives to be a better person as compared to a Muslim man who has only one wife.

5. Average life span of females is more than that of males

By nature, human males and females are born in approximately the same ratio. During paediatric age (early childhood) itself, a female child has more immunity than a male child. A female child can fight germs and diseases better than its male counterpart. For this reason, there are more deaths among males as compared to the females, during paediatric age.

During wars, there are more men killed as compared to women. More men die due to accidents and diseases than women. The average life span of females is more than that of males, and at any given time one finds more widows in the world than widowers.

6. India has a bigger male population than the female population due to rampant and widespread female foeticide and infanticide

India is one of the few countries, along with the other neighboring countries, in which the female population is less than the male population. The reason for this lies in the high rate of female infanticide in India, and the fact that more than one million female foetuses are aborted every year in India, after the foetus has been identified as female. If these evil practices of female infanticide and female foeticide are stopped, then India too will have more females as compared to males.

7. World female population is more than male population

In the USA, women outnumber men by 7.8 million. New York alone has one million more females as compared to the number of males, and of the male population of New York one-third are gays i.e. sodomites. The USA as a whole has more than twenty-five million gays. This means that these homosexual men do not wish to marry women.

Great Britain has four million more females as compared to males. Germany has five million more females as compared to males. Russia has nine million more females than males.

God alone knows how many million more females there are in the whole world today as compared to males.

8. Restricting each and every man to have only one wife is neither practical nor desirable

Even if every man got married to one woman, there would still be more than thirty million females in USA alone who would not be able to get husbands (considering that America has twenty five million gays). There would be more than four million females in Great Britain, 5 million females in Germany and nine million females in Russia alone who would not be able to find a husband.

Suppose a lady happens to be one of the unmarried women living in USA, and as years go by she cannot find a suitable man to marry, due to the fact that women far outnumber men in USA. The only two options that would remain for her are that she either marries a man who already has a wife, or she remains a spinster and becomes public property. There is no other option. All those who are modest will opt for the first.

In Western society, it is common for a man to have mistresses and/or multiple extra-marital affairs, in which case, the 'other woman' leads a disgraceful, unprotected and an insecure life. The same society, however, cannot accept a man having more than one wife, in which women retain their honourable, dignified position in society and lead a protected life.

We mentioned that the only two options before a woman who cannot find a husband to either marry a married man or to remain a spinster and become public property by having affairs with married men. Islam prefers giving women an honourable position by permitting the first option and disallowing the second.

There are several other reasons, why Islam has permitted limited polygyny but the main reason for this permission is to protect the modesty of women. (For more details, please view my videotape on "Women's Rights in Islam – Modernising or Outdated?"

Polygyny in Vishnusutra

Speaking of similarities, readers will be interested in knowing that Vishnusutra Chapter 24 Verse 1 states:

".... A Brahman may take four wives"

(Vishnusutra 24:1)

(Sacred Books of the East Vol. 7, The Institutes of Vishnu)

HINDU REFORMERS

1. Introduction

With the advent of British rule in India and with the introduction of western thought, Indian religions suffered a serious decline in terms of practicing adherents. At the beginning of the 19th century, several Indian reformers emerged all over India and spread their message for reforming Hindu society of its excessive rites, rituals and orthodoxy and for abolishing inequalities heaped on women in the name of religion.

2. Raja Ram Mohan Roy – Brahmo Samaaj

Raja Ram Mohan Roy of Bengal was the most outstanding pioneer of these movements. He was born in 1772 and he studied Persian, Arabic and English. He preached universalism in tune with the spirit of Upanishads. He also preached against rituals and worked for the abolition of Sati i.e. burning of a widow with the body of her dead husband.

In 1803, he published a book in Persian, “Tuhfat-ul-Muwahhidin”. It contains a protest against idolatry and tried to establish a universal religion based on the Oneness of God. He founded the ‘Brahmo Samaaj’ whose trust deed mentions, “No graven image, statue or sculpture, carving, painting, picture, portrait or the likeness of anything shall be admitted within the building”.

There were many offshoots of Brahmo Samaaj but the following doctrines in the renaissance of Hinduism were common to all:

- (i) No faith in Avataars.
- (ii) Denounce polytheism and idol worship.
- (iii) Against caste restrictions.
- (iv) Faith in the doctrine of Karma and rebirth was kept optional.

3. Justice M. G. Ranade – Prarthana Samaaj

Another offshoot of the Brahmo Samaaj, the Prarthana Samaaj was founded by Justice Ranade in Mumbai. It disapproved caste system, it encouraged and recognised widow re-marriage and encouraged education of women.

4. Swami Dayanand Saraswati – Arya Samaaj

As a reaction against the influence of Brahmo Samaaj and Prarthana Samaaj, Swami Dayanand Saraswati a Gujarati Brahmin founded the Arya Samaaj in 1875.

He fought against Hindu priesthood and wanted to bring Hinduism back to its Vedic glory. He disapproved Puranic Hinduism in favour of Vedic Hinduism. According to him, the Puranic texts had no Vedic sanction and Vedas alone were authoritative. This reformist movement tried to unify the Hindus under the umbrella of Vedic Hinduism and did not believe in concept of God coming in the form of Avataars.

5. Swami Vivekananda – Ramakrishna Mission

Swami Vivekananda was a great Hindu reformer and the founder of the Ramakrishna Mission. The objective of this Ramakrishna Mission was to spread the message of true Hinduism throughout India and in the western world. He was the student of Shri Ramakrishna Paramhansa.

The Swami said that the Vedas were not given, compiled or authored by any one person but the ideas evolved slowly until they were embodied in a book form and then the book became the authority. The Hindus have to follow the Vedas. He said that 99% of the huge Vedic literature was missing but whatever is left should be followed. He said that the word 'Hinduism' is a misnomer and the correct term for the religion is 'Vedantism'. Similarly the followers should not be called 'Hindus' but should be known as 'Vedantists'.

British and Indian politicians are to be blamed for dividing Hindus and Muslims.

a. Britishers responsible for dividing Hindus and Muslims

The Britishers came to our country a few centuries ago for trade and business but they gradually took over power, ruled over it and took away its wealth and resources. In order to rule such a vast country in an unchallenged manner, their policy was 'divide and rule'. They deliberately sowed and planted differences between the Hindus and Muslims. They also

tried to change the culture and beliefs of the local Indians. From history we learn that because of the Britishers, the Hindu culture and beliefs were diminishing.

b. Surge of Hindu Reformers

Hindu Reformers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Justice Ranade and others tried to remove the adulteration made by the Britishers in the Hindu Religion.

c. I am only a student of Comparative Religion

All the various facts that I have mentioned in this book about this major religion of Hinduism, have been obtained by me from the works of these reformers. Many of them may not have been aware that those beliefs of Hinduism that they sought to highlight are also part of the belief system of the Islamic faith. I am only a student of Comparative Religion. These great reformers have enlightened us on these aspects of Hinduism. In order to ensure that we do not take anybody's word for granted, I have taken care and verified all the statements and references mentioned by me in this book with authentic Hindu scriptures.

d. References mainly from Vedas but also from other Hindu Scriptures

Most of the aspects that I have mentioned in this book about Hinduism have been backed with references from the Vedas. However if similar thoughts, instructions and beliefs are present in other Hindu Scriptures, I have also quoted them, so that those Hindus who usually read the Bhagavad Gita and the Puranas etc., and believe in the Vedas but are not aware of its contents, will come closer to the Vedas by being aware of their teachings.

Some Hindus only believe in the Vedas. Others agree that Vedas are the most authentic, yet they practically follow the other Hindu scriptures. I have tried to address all types of Hindus, without deviating from the facts of Hinduism and of the Vedas.

Let me reiterate – amongst all the Hindu Scriptures, the Vedas are considered the most authentic. No other Hindu Scripture overrule the Vedas. According to Hindu Scholars, if there is a contradiction between the Vedas and any other Hindu scripture, the opinion of the Vedas will prevail.

e. Hindu Reformers enlighten us about Hinduism

Initially, even I was prey to the British philosophy of 'divide and rule'. I thought there cannot be similarities between Hinduism and Islam. It is

because of my study of the works of these Hindu reformers and scholars, that I too have become aware about these aspects of the Hindu faith.

f. India obtained freedom but most Indians are yet prisoners of the British Philosophy

Although our country India obtained freedom from British rule more than half a century back, yet most of us are still prisoners of the British philosophy of 'divine and rule'.

g. Most politicians too want to 'divide and rule'

Unfortunately most of the politicians of India have inherited, or rather adopted, the British strategy of 'divide and rule'. In order to obtain votes, most of them have created in the past, and continue to create hatred between the Hindus and Muslims. The maximum number of communal riots that take place in any country in the world is in India. If you analyze the root cause of these riots, a majority of these are due to the instigation of politicians for their vote banks.

h. Politicians add fire to the fuel

All politicians may not be such, but most of them unfortunately are, irrespective of whether they are Hindus or Muslims. People say that politicians add fuel to the fire. I totally disagree with them. According to me politicians add fire to the fuel. On most occasions fuel is cool and used for constructive works like running vehicles, planes, factories, and the construction of the country. These politicians add fire to the fuel and destroy the country.

i. "India will be a superpower in the next 20 years"

According to many economists, business leaders and management gurus, India will be a superpower in the next 20 years. An article published in the Times of India, Mumbai, in December 2003 stated that "according to Japan, India would be no.1 nation in the world in the next 20 years in terms of economic development and power".

We learn from History that before the British colonial rule, India was a wealthy and powerful country – a super power in the world in those times.

j. Request to Hindus, Muslims and politicians of India to free themselves from the British Policy

It is my humble and earnest request to my dear Hindu and Muslim Brothers and Sisters and the politicians of our beloved country India, that we should free ourselves from this British Policy of creating differences and divisions amongst ourselves. Let's go back to the Scriptures and concentrate on the similarities in order to build a stronger India. India once again would be a superpower much ahead of America and of European countries.

1. Most People read the Scriptures but do not understand

a. It is clearly mentioned in Rigveda Book 10 Hymn 71 Verse 4

“There may be someone who sees the words
and yet indeed does not see them;
may be another one who hears these words,
but indeed does not hear them.” (Rigveda 10:71:4)

The Rigveda testifies that many people read the book but yet do not try to ponder over its contents nor follow its teachings. The Vedas are crystal clear about the concept of One Creator Almighty God, who has no images, yet the followers worship a pantheon of gods and make images of God.

b. The Qur'an says:

*“Do ye enjoin right conduct
on the people, and forget
(to practice it) yourselves.
and yet ye study the Scripture?
Will ye not understand?” (Al Qur'an 2:44)*

Here the Qur'an is giving an example of children of Israel, who studied their scriptures but did not understand nor follow it.

Allah (swt) says in Surah Al Baqarah:

*Deaf, dumb and blind
They will not return (to the path). (Al Qur'an 2:18)*

2. “Religious personalities” prevent their followers from reading their scriptures with understanding

Most religious leaders of most of the major religions, be it Islam, Christianity or Hinduism, for their vested interests, prevent their followers from reading their sacred scriptures with understanding.

Since the common man does not know what is mentioned in his religious scriptures, the religious leaders keep on preaching their own views for their own benefits.

3. The Qur'an should be read with understanding

I have given a talk 'Al Qur'an – Should it be read with understanding?' where I have proved that the Qur'an was revealed for people to read, understand, follow and to abide by and implement its teachings. The best option is to know the language of the Qur'an i.e. Arabic, and understand the Qur'an by reading it in Arabic. Alternately, you can read the translation of the Qur'an in the language you understand the best.

4. Least division in Islam since Arabic is a living Language

Though there are minor differences in various schools of thought in Islam but the main teachings, principles and pillars of Islam are the same amongst all the Muslims and there is no deviation. All the Muslims believe in the One and the same God who has no images. They believe in the one and the same Qur'an, which has no different versions. They all believe in the same last messenger Muhammad (pbuh). The major reason for this unity is because the Arabic language, in which the Qur'an was revealed, is yet a living and spoken language amongst hundreds of millions of people. If anyone tries to manipulate the teachings of Islam he will be easily exposed.

Even Sir William Muir, who was a critic of Islam, was compelled to admit 200 years back – “There is probably in the world, no other book, which has remained 12 centuries with so pure a text.”

The language of the scriptures of all the major religions of the world, besides Islam, are languages known only by a handful of scholars. These languages are neither spoken nor understood by the vast multitude of people – thus making it very easy to manipulate and keep changing teachings as and when required.

5. Revive the Sanskrit Language

It is my request to the Indian Government and Hindu Brothers that the language of Sanskrit should be revived and made common to all Indians. Once we read the original Sanskrit of the Hindu Scriptures, especially the Vedas with understanding, all Indians, whether we are Hindus or Muslims, will come closer to the true religion of God.

6. At least follow the basic principles of the Religion

If we analyze our scriptures whether it be the Qur'an or the Vedas, there are many differences but the basic principles are the same i.e.:

1. We should worship no one besides the one true God, who has no images.
2. We should believe in and follow the last and final messenger of this God.
3. We should believe in the Books sent by God.
4. We should believe that there is life after death.
5. We should believe that this life is a test for the Hereafter.
6. And lastly, we should obey and follow the commandments of Almighty God so that we pass this test on earth and enter paradise in the next life.

7. Hindus are yet waiting for the Kalki Avataar

a. Muhammad (pbuh) is prophesied in Hindu Scriptures

There are numerous prophecies of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) in the Hindu scriptures. He is prophesied in all the four Vedas as well as in the Puranas. Even though it is crystal clear that the Kalki Avataar prophesied in the Kalki Purana and Bhagawata Purana refers undoubtedly to no one besides Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) yet the unaware masses are waiting for Kalki Avataar to appear.

b. Buddha is the 9th or 23rd Avataar

Buddha came about 2500 years ago and preached his religion in order to cleanse the Vedic religion of all superstition. Initially people did not accept him and treated him with hatred and contempt. They thought Buddhism was a new religion outside the pale of Vedic religion. Later it was proved that Buddha was the 23rd of the 24 Avataars prophesied in the Purana and people accepted him as an Avataar and the differences between Hinduism and Buddhism disappeared. Buddha is also considered as the 9th of the 10 Avataars of Vishnu.

c. Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) is the final 24th or 10th Avataar i.e. Kalki Avataar

Similarly the followers of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) are considered by many as opposed to the Vedic religion. In reality, as prophesied in the Hindu scriptures, Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) is the 24th or 10th Avataar i.e. the Last and Final prophet of Almighty God. To him was revealed the Last and Final revelation of Almighty God i.e. the Glorious Qur'an, which is the criterion

to judge right from wrong. With the help of the Qur'an, he has reaffirmed to the world the basic teachings of the Vedas, which are – believing in one God who has no images, is unborn and is Absolute and Eternal.

8. Surah Al Baqarah Chapter 2 Verse 208 and Surah Ale Imran Chapter 3 Verse 102

It is mentioned in the Qur'an:

*O ye believe!
Enter into Islam wholeheartedly;
and follow not the footsteps of the evil one;
for he is to you an avowed enemy. (Al Qur'an 2:208)*

*O ye who believe!
Fear Allah as He should be feared,
and die not except in a state of Islam. (Al Qur'an 3:102)*

A similar message is given in Bhagavad Gita Chapter 18 Verse 66:

“Abandon all varieties of religion and just surrender unto Me. I shall deliver you from all sinful reactions. Do not fear.” (Bhagavad Gita 18:66)

‘Islam’ in Arabic means surrendering and submitting your will to Almighty God. These Qur'anic Verses say enter into the state of submission and surrender your will to Almighty God and die not except in that state. Similarly Bhagavad Gita says abandon all different types of religion and just surrender.

9. Surah Yunus Chapter 10 Verse 108

I would like to conclude this work with this quotation of the Qur'an from Surah Yunus:

*“Say: O ye men!
Now Truth hath reached you from your Lord!
Those who receive Guidance,
do so for the good of their own souls;
those who stray, do so to their own loss:
And I am not (set) over you to arrange your affairs.”
(Al Qur'an 10:108)*

The author, Dr Zakir Naik, is a well-known international orator and scholar of Comparative Religion. He is the President of the Mumbai-based Islamic Research Foundation. He may be reached at zakir@irf.net

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